Vanshidhar Vidyalankar

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"SHAKUNTALA" – A TRAGEDY
&
OTHER ESSAYS

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by

Vanshidhar Vidyalankar

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To
Lakshmi Narayan Gupta
with
Affection and Esteem

CONTENTS

Foreword—Dr. Bhagwandas .. ..

Malvika and the Dance 1

Shakuntala—A Tragedy 19

The Art of Kalidasa—*Urvashi* 43

Abdur Rahim Khankhanan and His Hindi Poetry 63

Kabir—A poet of the common man .. 82

FOREWORD

I have had the pleasure of three talks with Pandit Vanshidhar Vidyalankar, Professor of Hindi in Osmania University of Hyderabad - Deccan. He is a very interesting conversationalist, full of his favourite subjects, Samskrit and Hindi Poetry and Literature, the gems of which he has examined in the light of the lamps provided by the new western ways of critical scrutiny. He is himself a poet of no small merit, in Hindi, as I readily saw from the lines which he recited to me, and which he had composed in very successful accord with canons and standards set by himself. His fine little poem on the small wild flower *sitaj* (unknown in the plains), amidst a bed of which he sat once, for hours, in Deva-ban, near Chakrata, shows equal accuracy of observation of nature and command of chaste 'Khariboli' Hindi, which is the same as the Arabic-less Urdu of the best Urdu poets, *e.g.*, Akbar Allahabadi and Hali.

Pt. Vanshidhar was good enough to show me copies of some articles of his in English, (published in the *Journal of the Osmania University*, and the *Triveni* of Madras), which deal with the three dramas of Kalidasa. A stranger, visiting an ancient but still living and great city, needs a good guide to point out to him the special architectural beauties, devout traditions, historic associations, which he may wholly miss otherwise. The wonders of Nature are multiplied tenfold, to a freshman and tyro, if he observes them in the company, and under the direction, of an old nature-lover; and a hundredfold if the Nature-lover is, not only a Wordsworth, but also a Darwin, a scientist who uses his eyes as well as a microscope. The same is the case with great poetry and literature. The uninstructed reader is apt to overlook the best points. Pt. Vanshidhar is a very competent guide to the excellences in Kalidasa's work and reveals new aspects of it which have been usually neglected.

I was greatly surprised, and greatly pleased also, when I found that he inclines to rank *Vikram-Urvashi* higher than world-famous *Shakuntala* ; surprised because he has ventured to depart from the universally accepted view ; pleased because my mind too tends to think the same. My mission in life has been different, and I have not had the opportunity of making any close study of Samskrit Drama, much less such close study as Pt. Vanshidhar has done and have been able just to read through a score of the currently known plays of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Bhasa, Shudraka, Harshavardhana, Vishakha-datta, etc., that too, many years ago. But it happens that I read through Kalidasa's three plays anew, recently, on the occasion of the country-wide bimillennial celebrations of the deeds and the poems, respectively, of the two famous compatriots and intimate friends, Vikrama and Kalidasa, inseparable in the people's mind. From this fresh reading, I derived a clear impression that, in passionate romance, rich imagination, shimmering flow of words, and unearthly elusive beauty, *Urvashi* is distinctly superior to *Shakuntala*. The heaven-world of *Shakuntala* is only a replica of this earth, scarcely more glorified. While the virgin, the woman, the mother Shakuntala is undoubtedly a splendid and deservedly acclaimed creation, she is very human ; and Dushyanta is, on the whole, a poor creature. But Urvashi is not a young and innocent girl like Shakuntala when we first meet her, but a very long-lived nymph of the empyrean, a gleaming vision of dance and song, humanised for a time, by her sudden love for a glorious human being (the Puranas tell us that a Committee, appointed by Indra, the king of heaven, of heavenly nymphs, led by Urvashi, under the chairmanship of the Rishi Narada, toured the whole earth and reported to Indra that Pururava was the handsomest man of the time !), who also is semi-divine, the son of the god Budha (Woden, Mercury) and the princess Ila (one of the names of the Earth), and who too falls in love with her. Equally suddenly she disappears from his side in an unguarded moment—because of a curse, quite in keeping with the whole 'phenomenal' setting of the story ; the king goes love-mad ; and then we have changing scenes and moods and little rhapsodical cries and songs, shifting swiftly like the colours of a raintime sunset. Some of these little songs are exquisitely beautiful, stirring, elusive, like the best of Shelley and Shakespeare. The whole ensemble is that of a magic landscape ; forest, torrent, mountain, yeilding place to one another, as in a dream ; in which dryads become trees and creepers when approached, and these become dryads again when receded from ; where Nature-spirits and Nature-things flow into one another, so to say, as is to be expected in 'dream'—worlds, subtler, more tenuous, than the physical Forms 'clothed with light,' enveloped in auras,' are naturally less sharply defined, less clear-cut, than shapes of denser, coarser, flesh and bone. In the drama, Urvashi is actually transformed into a creeper, in consequence of the curse above alluded to ; and then is retransformed into herself by a corresponding blessing in the shape of a reuniting jewel (like the ring in *Shakuntala*)—to the instantaneous cure from madness, and the vast delight, of King Pururava, as also of the audience, of course!

Pt. Vanshidhar's article brings out this 'ethereal' quality of the play. I hope he will be able to expatiate further on this aspect of it. His study of *Shakuntala* also is very original, in that it emphasises the cruel sorrows inflicted on her by the fickleness, the forgetful carelessness, possibly even the treacherous deceitfulness of Dushyanta ; and rightly indicates that the play would be more a tragedy than a comedy, were it not for the 'incident' or rather 'accident' of the 'discovery' of the lost ring and the 'recovery' of his 'memory' by Dushyanta, One verse, uttered by Dushyanta, is frequently quoted as illustrating the recognition of 'conscience' in Indian thought : "In matters of doubt, the good man's inner prompting provides the solution." But the 'inner prompting' of at least some thoughtful readers is likely to suggest that sensuous-minded Dushyanta is casuistically identifying his sexual fancy of the moment with 'Conscience.' To show that an important matter of ethics is in serious doubt, there must first be consultation and then difference of opinion between serious-minded persons ; there was none such in this case. One wonders what Kalidasa's own feeling was in the matter. Has he put the verse into the mouth of Dushyanta in a mood of sympathy with him, or in a mood of ironical antipathy, to show how 'irresponsible' kings twist theologico-legal maxims to suit their own purpose ? The self complacent conceit of Dushyanta is that he himself is quite unquestionably and indubitably a " good man," even while scheming to deceive an innocent girl ! It is curious that even Goethe has nothing to say about this feature of Dushyanta's conduct ; he is so lost in his unreserved admiration for *Shakuntala*.

Malavika-Agnimitra, the third play, has some slight historical value, as Agnimitra is a historical person. In keeping with this character of the play, no preternatural *deus ex machina*, no supra-mundane devices, are employed in it. But, as in *Shakuntala* so in this, the heroine is a much finer creature than the hero. Pt. Vanshidhar rightly points out that Kalidasa's heroines are all much finer than his heroes, with the exception, perhaps, of Pururava. Even that divine-god, as of course Dushyanta or Agnimitra has his regular queen, married earlier; and the great business of all, and of their courtiers, is to reconcile the crowned queen to the new wives, and to make the former accept the latter as submissive friends. And also of course, ' as in duty bound.' the good ' Hindu " queens do so. They were not like Tennyson's 'dream ' of the ' Egyptian'

(Cleopatra) "who would have clung to Fulvia's waist and thrust the dagger through her side." But there have been Indian queens also, as fierce as beautiful. Some are mentioned in the Puranas.

I strongly recommend everyone interested in such matters, to read Pandit Vanshidhar's writings on Kalidasa and any other Samskrit and Hindi dramatists and poets whom he may think it worth while to write on. If the reader is an old student of such literature, he will probably find interesting and pleasing new aspects exposed to his view ; if young, he will find his understanding deepened, his appreciation heightened, his delight enriched, his enthusiasm for further study stimulated.

Benares (*Cantt.*)
20 *June*, 1944.

BHAGAVAN DAS

MALAVIKA AND THE DANCE

There are three dramas that are ascribed to Kalidasa. The first is the *Malavikagnimtram* which I shall call the *Malavika*, the second the *Vikramorvasheeyam* to which I shall refer as the *Urvashi* and the third the *Abhijnanshakuntalam* which I shall describe as the *Shakuntala* as Kalidasa is mainly a poet of heroines rather than of heroes.

I think it was Kalidasa who revived the dramatic art of India with his three dramas, brought a new sunshine and infused into drama a growing spirit and vitality, exquisite grace and consummate charm and elevating inspiration. Presumably after Bhasa it was Kalidasa that understood the value of this great Indian art. No one will deny the fact that it was Kalidasa who made Sanskrit drama popular, and credit must also go to him for the subsequent development of this art.

From his *Malavika* it appears that he introduced certain innovations in Sanskrit drama but in the absence of a detailed history of the growth of the Indian drama, it is very difficult to point out what exactly these innovations were. The influence of the writings and style of Kalidasa was so immensely great, the imitation of his style so close and extensive and his particular technique so profusely adopted by later eminent poets and dramatists that his method became almost conventional. So, to say with precision that these are the special features that were first brought in by Kalidasa, will be somewhat extravagant if not altogether inaccurate. But from his following verse it is evident that he introduced certain innovations:—

" पुराणमित्येव न साधु सर्वम्
न चापि नूनं नवमित्यवद्यम् ।
सन्तः परीक्ष्यान्यतरद्भजन्ते
मूढ : परप्रत्ययनेयबुद्धिः ॥ "

Everything is not good because it is old, nor should a thing be condemned because it is new. Sensible critics take either of the two after examining the merits and demerits of both, but fools are always guided by the opinion of others. The *Malavika* was the first drama that Kalidasa wrote. Generally all the critics have the idea that it is the most ordinary drama as it is far below the standard and achievements of Kalidasa. It was due to this perhaps that scholars at first refused to believe that this drama was the work of the creative genius of Kalidasa. They maintained that it was some other Kalidasa who wrote that drama. But later on when they were forced to admit the fact reluctantly, they argued that as it was the first drama that the poet wrote, it was natural that it did not possess the same grace and charm which his later mature works like the *Shakuntala* have. Many Indian scholars also entertain almost the same notions. I have no time and space here to quote the opinions of these scholars but it is the sum and substance of what they say with regard to this drama of Kalidasa.

Of course if we study the *Malavika* with western critical notions, it will be difficult for us to say anything contrary to the remarks that have been made about its author. There cannot be a greater way of doing injustice to a work of real art and beauty than to evaluate it by one uniform set of rules, one identical yardstick or norm of one specified type.

The *Malavika* is a type by itself though many scholars regard its plot as conventional. In certain respects, it is one of the most remarkable dramas that not only Kalidasa but also the whole of Sanskrit literature has produced. Although it resembles other Sanskrit dramas in its plot and certain points that some critics regard as conventional, Kalidasa has breathed into it a new life of exquisite charm which is unique and most unconventional. It is no exaggeration to say that the *Malavika* is in its own way a splendid revelation of the poet's masterly attainments both in the domain of art and poetry, his wonderful deep insight, creative richness and marked originality. The *Malavika* possesses some scenes of exceptional beauty which are without parallel in earlier or later Sanskrit drama.

In the *Malavika* we find that the poet is ardently pleading the cause of the art of representation and especially of dancing. *Malavika* the heroine of the drama, has been introduced first by the poet as a dancing girl, though later on he discloses that she was a royal princess, a younger sister of the King of Vidarbha or Berar. Through *Malavika* we come to know that Kalidasa was not only a great poet, scholar and dramatist but also a great musician and a lover of the art of dancing. By the study of the *Malavika* we can get an idea of the excellence of the art of dancing in ancient India.

Malavika is a slender and tender creeper of the youthful loveliness of the garden of the human spring, which adorned with sweet and colourful flowers and being constantly swayed into a rhythmical dance by the soft breezes brings vividly and artistically into play through varied musical gestures the deep emotions and sentiments of the human breast. The merit of the *Malavika* does not lie so much in its plot or in its unfolding love-affairs or in characterization as in the artistic dance of Malavika, which is altogether a new and unique feature of this drama. To us Malavika appears to be the very image of the classical dance which India developed many centuries ago. Through the *Malavika* Kalidasa gave a new orientation to the art of dancing. Through this drama he not only tried to popularize dancing but also to restore it to its pristine beauty and glory. Bharata Muni had made a detailed mention of dancing in his *Natyashastra* and Bhasa also had shown *Hallishaka* हल्लीशक dance or a kind of circular dance in his *Balcharita* drama performed by Damodar Krishna in the glades of the वृन्दावन Vrinda-forest along with friends and maidens to the music of the drum and song, but it was Kalidasa who through the *Malavika* gave it a new scientific finish and charm and vitality. Malavika has been placed in such conditions wherein she cannot give out the contents of her heart and so eventually she is forced to have recourse to the language of gesture which only a trained eye can understand. Words end in poetry, poetry in music and music in the delicate and mute rhythm of the gestures of dancing. The art of expression begins in silence and ends in silence.

Carlyle writes somewhere in his essays that music is the language of the gods. What he means to say is that music is one of the most divine things. He felt constrained to write it because he thought that musicians are not given an honourable place in society. Though they are appreciated, they are not given, as a rule, that respect which they rightly deserve. But in comparison with dancing, music enjoys a more respectable place. Dancing is regarded as one of those abominable objects with which a gentleman or a virtuous person should have nothing to do.

I suppose that in the age of Kalidasa also it was so. And therefore when the first act opens the poet says through the mouth of Ganadasa, the great dancing-master:—

"सर्वस्यापि कुलविद्या वहुमता । नास्माकं पुनः
नाट्यं प्रति मिथ्या गौरवम् ॥"

"It is true that everyone cherishes a high regard for his hereditary lore but it is not in any way presumptuous if we attach great dignity to our art of dancing."

Not only this, he adds further:—

> " देवानामिदमामनन्ति मुनयः कान्तं क्रतुं चाक्षुषम्
> रुद्रेणेदमुमाकृतव्यतिकरे स्वाङ्गे विभक्तं द्विधा "

"The great sages thought that dancing is the most sacred and the most ecstatic treat to the eyes of gods. By the God Shiva it has been represented in two different forms," *i.e.*, *Lasya* and *Tandava* in his body, incorporated with that of Uma. *Lasya* लास्य is a dance in which the emotions of love are represented by means of various gestures and attitudes, and *Tandava* is the ecstatic or violent dance of Shiva. The word *Kratu* or *Yajna* cannot be adequately translated into English. Dancing is a *Yajna* or a heavenly visual feast or an entrancing pageant meant for the eyes of the gods. There cannot be a better and greater laudatory term for dancing than this one which has been so appropriately used by Kalidasa. If music is the language of the gods, dancing is a ravishing spectacle for the eyes of the gods. By this one word *Yajna* and by showing that it is the creation of the God Shiva Himself the poet has tried to affirm that there is no cause whatsoever to regard dancing as something ignoble, vicious or unworthy of virtuous people. Even in the first benedictory stanza the poet states implicitly that the God Shiva is moving this whole world by means of the wondrous dance that he performs with his eight forms:—

> " एकैश्वर्यस्थितेऽपि प्रणतबहुफले यः स्वयं कृत्तिवासाः,
> कान्तासम्मिश्रदेहोऽप्यविषयमनसां यः परस्ताद् यतीनाम्

अष्टाभिर्यस्य कृत्स्नं जगदपि तनुभिर्बिभ्रतो नाभिमानः,
सन्मार्गलोकनाय व्यपनयतु बस्तामसीं वृत्तिमीशः"

If one studies these lines closely, one will surely realize that in them Kalidasa has ingeniously demonstrated the great dance of the God Shiva Himself. In the first line he says, "Though he commands perfect supremacy over the whole universe, gives His worshippers anything they ask for, He clothes Himself only with an elephant skin or in other words possesses nothing but an elephant skin." In the second line he says, "Though He possesses a body, incorporated with that of His beloved spouse, He is far beyond the power of visualization of the great seers whose mind is so pure that it can reflect even those things which are beyond the reach of the senses. In other words there is nothing which the seers cannot visualize with their minds, but even with all their power of visualization they cannot even faintly see the bodily form of the God Shiva identified with that of Parvati" In the third line he writes "Though He moves the whole world with His eight forms, He does not feel any attachment to it. In other words He moves the whole world and yet remains unmoved Himself or He Himself keeps apart from it." In the fourth line he prays for the dissipation of the darknesss of ignorance that prevails about the art of *Marga* मार्ग or dancing. *Marga* is a high style of acting, dancing and singing.

"मार्गोऽपि देशी तद्भेदः कथितो नाटयवेदिभि :"

The beauty of dancing lies in creating a graceful harmony between two apparent contradictions. It as it were bridges the gulf that apparently exists between light and darkness, between life and death and between expressiveness and muteness. In the first three lines the poet has expounded this function of dancing. In dancing one is to remain mute and then to pour out in full the contents of one's heart; one is to show one thing and then to mean quite another thing. In the fourth line the poet prays for the removal of the state of ignorance so that everyone may understand and appreciate the beauty and significance of this great art.

Malavika gives an exhibition in the second act of छलिक *Chhalika* or चलित *Chalita* dance. This is a classical dance. This dance is the most perfect type and therefore very difficult to represent as Pandit Kaushiki remarks:—

"देव! चतुष्पदोद्भवं चलितं दुष्प्रयोज्यमुदाहरन्ति"

"My lord, the experts consider *Chalita* चलित dance based on the *Chatushpada* चतुष्पद, a song of four parts, as the most difficult one to be performed." This is the definition of the *Chalita* चलित dance:—

"तदेव च्छलितं नाम साक्षाद् यद्यभिनीयते,
व्यपदिश्य पुरावृत्तं स्वाभिप्रायप्रकाशकम्
चतुर्विधाभिनयवद्यज्जातिस्वरसंभृतम्
शृङ्गाररसभूयिष्ठं सलयं चलितं विदुः"

The same is called by the name of *Chhalita* छलित also. In it the dancer in the garb of some legendary character or under the plea of representing the sentiments of another person displays vividly his own. In this dance all the four kinds of dances, *i.e.*, *Angika* आङ्गिक gestural, conveyed by bodily actions, *Vachika* वाचिक Vocal, conveyed by words, *Aharya* आहार्य extraneous, conveyed by dress, ornaments, decoration, etc., and *Satwika* सात्विक Internal, conveyed by the manifestation of internal feelings indicated by perspiration, thrilling, etc., coinciding with the time and tune of the corresponding music are represented. It reflects mostly erotic sentiments.

Obviously this dance is difficult to perform, as it embraces all the essential characteristics, details and technique of classical dancing. Malavika exhibited this very dance in a masterly fashion on the stage of *Prekshagriha* प्रेक्षागृह or royal theatre. It is a marvellous feat that can never fail to impress on the audience the greatness of dancing as an art. Moreover her dance is so artistic that it clearly brings into view the sentiments of her breast. When Pandit Kaushiki pronounces her verdict as umpire on the dance of Malavika, it appears as if the art of dancing, identifying itself with the body of Malavika, is dancing in its full divine splendour and glory on the stage of the royal theatre. Surely through this amazing dance Kalidasa has presented a spectacle which even the gods will be proud to witness and which will send them into raptures.

When Malavika comes on the stage, wearing the dancer's dress to perform the *Chalita* चलित dance, King Agnimitra describes the beauty of her body in memorably vivid words.

"दीर्घाक्षं शरदिन्दुकान्तिबदनं बाहू नतावंसयो:
संक्षिप्तं निबिडोन्नतस्तमुर: पांर्श्वे प्रमृष्टे इव
मध्य: पाणिमितो नितम्बि जघनं पादावरालाङ्गुली,
छन्दो नर्तयितुर्यथैव मनस: श्लिष्टं तथास्या वपु: "

"Her face with her broad eyes is lovely like the autumn moon, her arms are curved at the shoulders, her chest is compact, having close-touching high breasts, her sides are as if smoothly chiselled off, her waist can be held in the fist, her hips are expansive, her feet have toes slightly curved. Her body thus seems moulded just according to the high aspirations of the greatest master of dancing."

Malavika after some उपवहन upavahana or preliminary singing, sings the following song with gestures harmonizing with the sentiments contained therein. The original stanza is in Prakrit.

"दुल्लहों पिओ तस्मिं भव हृदय निरासम्
अम्हो अपङ्गओ मे पप्फुरई किं पि वामों
एसो सो चिरदिट्ठो कहं उवणइदव्वो,
णाह मं पराहीणं तुई गणअ सतिण्हम्
दुर्लभ: प्रियस्तस्मिन् भव हृदय निराशम्
अहो अपाङ्गको मे प्रस्फुरति किमपि वाम:
एष स चिरदृष्ट: कथमुपनेतव्यो
नाथ मां पराधीनां त्वयि गणय सतृष्णाम्

O heart, it is hard to obtain the beloved,
and so in your efforts you become disappointed;

But why, O why, is the outer corner of my
left eye throbbing;

How should I get to him, him whom I have
seen after such a long time;

O lord, I am dependent, I am not my own
mistress, but consider me as one who is
passionately longing for you.

Though we cannot lay any claim to the knowledge of dancing, the above song has been so composed, its time and tune being so perfect and apparent that it appears to us sometimes as if we see in it the glimpse of that marvellous dance that Malavika enacts. In it we seem to visualize her delicately gesticulating hands and listen to the sweet rhythmical jinglings of the anklets of her feet, placed according to the time and tune of the song. In the first line there is utter hopelessness but in the second an unseen hope is throbbing to be fulfilled; in the third helplessness comes in but in the fourth, transcending all this helplessness she brings into view through lovely gestures her ardent longing to meet her lord which is lurking in her breast. You will see that there is a contradiction in each line and out of these contradictions there arises a perfect note of unison that perspicuously brings out its meaning.

I try sometimes to sing this song in a manner that would suggest the movements and the rhythm of the dance. The song says literally one thing but its musical vibrations disclose just another thing. In it the hopelessness becomes converted into hope and the helplessness into such a delightful reflection of her soul that transmits through eloquent gestures her own aspiring love and deep longing which struggle hard and yet know not how to express themselves.

This is the verdict that Pandit Kaushiki passes on the dance of Malavika:–

" यथादृष्टं सर्वमनवद्यम् ।
अङ्गैरन्तर्निहितवचनैः सूचितः सम्यगर्थः
पादन्यासो लयमुपगतस्तन्मयत्वं रसेषु
शाखायोनि मृंदुरभिनयस्तद्विकल्पानुवृत्तौ
भावो भावं नुदति विषयाद्रागबन्धः स एंव "

" Everything was just as the *shastras* mention. There was nothing left to be added. The meaning was appropriately brought into view by her limbs, the movements of which were charmingly eloquent with expression: the placing of her feet was in perfect harmony with time; she was the very image of the sentiments that she brought into play; the gesture enacted through hands was graceful and gentle; when the acting of one sentiment was over, others came successively in its place, but the interest remained just the same; though there was variation in sentiment, the mind remained in the same way spellbound."

This stanza can be fully and clearly explained by a person who is well-versed in the art of dancing.

But it may be asserted without any fear of contradiction that that dance must be of very high merit, the description of which could be given in such eloquent words.

This is what the Vidushaka says about this dance:—

"न केवलं रूपे शिल्पेऽ प्यद्वितीया मालविका"

"Not only in beauty but in artistic skill also Malavika is unsurpassed."

This is the opinion of King Agnimitra:—

"अव्याजसुन्दरीं तां विज्ञानेन ललितेन योजयता,
परिकल्पितो विधात्रा बाणः कामस्य विषदिग्धः ।।"

"The creator by endowing her who is artlessly beautiful with such a charming art, has prepared an arrow of flowers steeped in poison."

It is but natural that Pandit Ganadasa, the great dancing master congratulates himself on this

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Malavika, an arrow of flowers steeped in poison; there cannot be a better description of Malavika than this one. In Hindi there is a master-poet Biharilal about whom it is generally said:—

"सतसैया के दोहरे, ज्यों नावक के तीर।
देखन में छोटे लगें, घाव करें गम्भीर ।।"

Dohas of the *Satsai* of Biharilal are just like the arrows of a skilful hunter. They are small in size but their cut is very sharp and deep. Likewise it can be said of the poems of Kalidasa that they are arrows of flowers steeped in poison. While depicting the beauty of Malavika, the poet has perhaps unwittingly depicted characteristically the inherent beauty of his own poems.

glorious achievement of Malavika. He exclaims with pride:—

"अद्य नर्तयितास्मि।"

"Today I consider myself as a real dancing preceptor."

This one scene is quite enough to establish that *Malavika* is a drama of great excellence. But apart from it, there are many other scenes that are highly interesting and entertaining and bear vividly the stamp of the ingenious wit and skilful art of Kalidasa. The scene of the quarrel between the two great dancing-masters, Ganadasa and Haradatta, depicting how pandits become irritated and quarrel when their authority is questioned; the painting and adorning of the feet of Malavika, striking of the *ashoka* tree with her ornamented feet in order to fulfil its longing and its blossoming forth within five nights; Iravati's voilent spasms of jealousy; witty repartees and lively remarks that excite laughter; the noble pretensions and the pitiful state of King Agnimitra; the subtle, humorous and smart witticisms of Vidushaka; the stately figure of Queen Dharini, the wonderful and immortal poetic descriptions that one meets with on every page, are some of the salient features each of which can be discussed in many interesting articles. When at last Queen Dharini offers the hand of Malavika to King Agnimitra under the blooming *ashoka* tree in the pleasure-garden it reminds us of the following remarkable *Doha* of Biharilal:–

"मानहुँ मुँह - दिखरावनी, दुलहिहि करि अनुराग
सास सदन, मन ललनहू; सौतिन दियो सुहाग"

When a new bride comes for the first time to the house of the bridegroom a ceremony is observed in Hindu families in Upper India which is termed as *Mukha-dikharavani* or the ceremony of showing the face of the new bride. The relatives and friends come on this occasion and after having a look at the face of the bride offer her some presents. The poet says that in the ceremony of seeing the face of the new bride the mother-in-law gave her as present the house to live in, the bridegroom his heart and the co-wives their *Sowbhagya* सौभाग्य, the very auspicious state of their wifehood, their all, so also, Queen Dharini gave away her *Sowbhagya* to Malavika in order to please her lord.

It appears that Vidarbha Desha or Berar in ancient times was famous throughout the length and breadth of India on account of its great artistic achievements. Rukmini, wife of Lord Krishna belonged to this very kingdom. Damayanti, wife of King Nala, Indumati, wife of King Aja and this Malavika, 'this arrow of flowers steeped in poison,' also belonged to this very Province. When Malavika is being adorned, Pandit Kaushiki is asked by Queen Dharini to adorn her according to the fashion prevalent in Vidarbha.

" भगवति! यत्त्वं प्रसाधनगर्वं वहसि तद्दर्शय मालविकायाः शरीरे वैदर्भं विवाहनेपथ्यम्। तयैव सविशेषालङ्कृता मालविका।

"Oh revered lady, if you are really proud of your skill in decoration then show the style of decoration prevalent in Vidarbha on marriage-occasions on the body of Malavika." Accordingly Malavika is very tastefully adorned by her. While commenting on this Raja Katyawem writes:—

"विदर्भदेशीयानां शृङ्गारविधौ प्रसिद्धत्वात्।"

The countrymen of Vidarbha are famous in the art of decoration. Besides there is a *Reeti* रीति a style of writing which is called by the name of Vaidarbhi Reeti वैदर्भी रीति. This is considered to be the best style of writing. There is every likelihood that this style also might have been very popular in Vidharbha Desha.

"माधुर्यव्यञ्जकैर्वर्णैः, रचना ललितात्मिका।
अवृत्तिरल्पवृत्तिर्वा, वैदर्भी रीतिरिष्यते॥"

"That style of composition is called Vaidarbhi in which there are elegant words and short sentences with few compounds."

It was not with the purpose of depicting polygamy or to show the love-intrigues in the harems of Indian kings that Kalidasa composed this drama, as is generally remarked by Western critics. It should be borne in mind that *Malavika* was written to be played on the occasion of the great festival of Spring. In ancient times it appears that with the advent of Spring many a festivity used to take place in India and enacting a drama also was one of the happy featrues. Naturally such a drama could not afford to be of a serious nature, as with the wealth of flowers and vernal beauty abroad, the wealth of human mind came out in the exuberance of music, art and dancing as if to join hands with nature in making the world happy. On this occasion light jests, erotic jokes, artful repartees, sportive humour and happy pleasantries became the order of the day and the whole atmosphere got surcharged with frolic, mirth and laughter. In these scenes Kalidasa has beautifully reflected the jocund atmosphere that prevailed in those times. Even today one can see the poor remnants of this sprightliness in India on the occasion of Holi, the great Spring festival. Who will not heartily laugh at the delightful remarks made by Iravati and Vidushaka? On the occasion of the marriage of Malavika and King Agnimitra who had already many a lady in his harem, Vidushaka says:—

"सर्वोऽपि हि नववरो लज्जातुरो भवति।"

"Every new bridegroom feels shy at first."

That the poet King Shree Harsha-Deva wrote his dramas *Ratnavali Natika* and *Priyadarshika* on the lines of *Malavikagnimitram* to be enacted on the occasion of the great Spring festival, proves the great popularity that this drama enjoyed. I feel convinced that so long as the Sanskrit language lasts, the name of Malavika will live enshrined in the hearts of the poets and those who value art, the significance and purpose of which is half revealed in the rapidly moving events of the every-day world and remains half concealed in the eternal mystery of the evergrowing and everjoyful spirit of Beauty, the divine source of all enjoyment and creation.

SHAKUNTALA—A TRAGEDY

There are very few old dramatic pieces in the world on which such universal approbation has been bestowed for sublimity and picturesqueness of artistic expression, loveliness and sweetness of elegant poetry—breathing pleasant and tender emotions, dainty and rapturous feelings and deep and sorrowful sentiments—as the *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa. It is one of those great dramas which enjoy an international reputation. When Europe and the world at large knew practically nothing of the great artistic achievements of the stage in India,—it was the *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa that gave evidence of the magnificent wealth of dramatic composition that India could boast of.

It will not be any exaggeration to remark that the study of Sanskrit language and literature received a great impetus and opened up new vistas to progressive and extensive research work not long after a translation of the *Shakuntala* into English by Sir William Jones reached the shores of Europe. Through this one drama, Kalidasa was able to secure a permanent place among the greatest poets and playwrights of the world. It is through such unique literary creations that a language, a nation and a country are truly enriched and made immortal.

A great work of art is a blessing to him who creates and to him who enjoys it. From age to age it is bequeathed with great pride as a precious and noble heritage to the great mass of humanity. The very feeling of joy begins to throb with life, gets adequately rewarded and sparkles in its full gleam and splendour when the charm of a work of art is exquisitely realized in its consummate richness. If it is true to say that the highest creation of God is man, it is also equally true to say that the highest achievement of man is art. By means of art the very soul of man finds expression and lives through eternity.

Shakuntala possesses even after the lapse of many centuries the same freshness, vitality, and grace, which it had when it first made its appearance. Though so much water has flowed under the bridge of Time and so many upheavals have changed the face of the world, this drama of Kalidasa continues to have the same vigorous hold and casts the same overpowering spell over the minds of men as it did on the day of its first appearance. The beauty of *Shakuntala* is as much a source of delight to great poets and dramatists of the present day as it was to those of the past. Its appeal is so soul-stirring, its charm so transcendental, its poetry so unsurpassed and its pathos so touching that it is hardly possible to realize its full value, importance and significance even at this day. In it human passions, emotions and sentiments have found their exquisite reflection in such natural and universal colours that every age is apt to regard it as peculiarly its own.

Shakuntala presents a tale of love which on one side is innocent, chaste, unsophisticated

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and romantic and on the other artful, frail, insidious and unimaginative. It strikes a note which is profoundly serene and immeasurably entertaining but is at the same time oppressively tragic and inexpressibly sad. Nowhere has love been portrayed in such attractive and such repulsive colours. Love appears to be nothing but a shocking and painful contradiction in this drama. Just at the time when love desires to fulfil its destined purpose, it meets with a calamitous accident from which even its later fortunate escape does not enable it to rise to its natural altitude or secure its original position. It appears as if love wearing its best apparel and laurels is lustily on its way to the court of Spring to display its full majesty when unexpectedly it falls into a quagmire with all its clothes spoiled, flowers crushed and face disfigured so that even its subsequent recovery does not restore it to its original charm. It is really tragic to find in this story that love has to go and knock at its own door and fails to get a spontaneous response and when somehow the response comes, all its warmth, enthusiasm and spontaniety appear to have vanished.

It is generally affirmed by eminent scholars—Western and Indian, that tragedy was not known to Sanskrit dramatists. Tragedy presents a realistic view of life and breathes emotions and passions of such type as possess the power to stir the inmost depths of the heart of mankind as nothing else can. The absence of this factor has led many critics to believe that Sanskrit drama lacks close touch with real life. They also assert that Sanskrit drama is more or less a conventional literary form presented in a most conventional manner. In their opinion it is a creation of elaborate art and poetic ingenuity. Instead of laying bare to the view with eloquent and forceful simplicity the real aspects of human life—it endeavours to screen it from sight behind an ornamental veil which, however beautiful and inspiring, breathes an air of artificiality. It fails to bring forth any significant motif. At best it may prove a delighful treat but it does not contain a true reflection of real life.

From one point of view there may be some truth in these assertions but when all is said, it will be found that the close acquaintance of a critic with one form of art, so estranges him from other unknown or less known forms that his judgement is rendered generally defective. The deep appreciation of the one makes him unconsciously so one-sided and prejudiced that he cannot do full justice to the other to which he is more or less a stranger.

In Europe drama has been chiefly divided into two classes—comedy and tragedy. In India drama has been divided into nine classes. The class of a drama is determined by the *Rasa* (रस) or sentiment which the poet or playwright chiefly intends to embody in his drama. As there are nine *Rasas* or sentiments according to Sanskrit rhetoricians—drama also falls into nine classes. In these sentiments there is one called "करुण-रस" *Karuna-Rasa* or the sentiment of pathos. The drama which predominantly portrays and evokes the emotions or sentiments of pathos is a drama that belongs to this class. As tragedy invokes the feelings of pity, naturally it comes under the category of the drama of *Karuna*. Bharat-Muni the famous originator of *Natyashastra* in Sanskrit—discussing the origin of the sentiment of pathos remarks:—

"अथ करुणो नाम शोकस्थायिभावभवः। सच शापक्लेशविनिपातेष्टजनविप्रयोगविभवनाशवधबन्धविद्रवोपघातव्यसनसंयोगादिभिर्विभावैःसमुपजायते ॥"

"Pathos arises from the permanent mood of sorrow and this sorrow results from curse, calamity, separation from relatives, loss of property, murder, defeat, disease and ill-luck." And again:—

"इष्टवधदर्शनाद्वा, विप्रियवचनस्य संश्रवाद्वापि।
एभिर्भावविशेषैः करुणरसो नाम संभवति ॥"

"The sentiment of pathos springs up by seeing the process of killing one's own dear ones or by hearing some distressing news or such other causes."

Sharadatanaya repeats the same thing in his *Bhavaprakashanam* adding a few more sources of the sentiment of *Karuna*. Sharadatanaya is supposed to belong to the early part of the 12th century.

"शोकात्मा करुणः—"

"अभीष्टविरहाच्छापात्, क्लेशाच्च विनिपातनात्।
वधादिष्टस्य पुत्रादेर्निधनादर्थहानितः ॥
राज्यदेशपरिभ्रंशादन्य-व्यसनोदयात्।
दैवोपघाताद्दारिद्र्याद् व्याध्यादिभ्यः प्रजायते ॥"

"Sorrow is the soul of pathos.........."

"This sorrow springs from various causes, *viz.*, the separation from one's beloved and dear people, curse, catastrophe, murder of one's beloved, death of a son and other relatives, loss of money, loss of kingdom and country and other such calamities, misfortune, poverty, disease and such other causes."

Vishwanatha in his *Sahitya-Darpan* sums up the whole thing in this way:—

"इष्टनाशादनिष्टाप्तेः करुणाख्यो रसो भवेत् ।"

"From the ruin of the desired and by the happening of the undesired the sentiment of pathos springs."

Thus it is clear that what is characterized as tragedy in European criticism is in essence only a drama of *Karuna Rasa*, or the sentiment of pathos. There may be differences in detail, technique or construction but to say that tragedy was absolutely unknown to Sanskrit dramatists is to ignore facts.

For further elucidation of this point, I quote Bharata again to show how मरणम् or Death should be enacted:—

"मरणं नाम व्याधिजमभिधातजञ्च । अभिघातजे तु नानाप्रकारा अभिनयविशेषाः । शस्त्रक्षताहिदष्टविषपीतगजादिपतितश्वापदहताः । तत्र शस्त्रक्षते तावत्सहसा भूमिपतनवेपनस्फुरणादिभिरभिनयः प्रयोक्तव्यः ।"

"Death may be brought about either by disease or killing. In killing also there are various types of representation. It may be caused by a weapon, snake-bite, poisoning, falling down from the back of an elephant or the top of a mountain, mauling by a beast. If death is inflicted by a weapon it should be enacted by the actor by falling on the ground, trembling, twitching, struggling, etc." Giving detailed instructions as to the enacting of death in each of the cases mentioned above he concludes:—

"इत्येवं मरणं ज्ञेयं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।
प्रयोक्तव्यं बुधैः सम्यग्यथा भावा विचेष्टितैः ॥"

"So death can be brought about by various agencies. The skilled actor should represent it with such sentiments and gestures as may perfectly harmonize with the occasion."

Many Sanskrit dramatists have introduced death in their dramas. Bhasa has shown the death of King Dasharatha in Act III of his *Pratima-Nataka*, the death of Bali in his *Abhisheka-Nataka*, the death of Duryodhana in his *Uru-bhanga-Nataka*. Thus he has presented death in many of his dramas. In later dramas efforts were made to present the shadow of death on the stage though actual death was usually avoided. In *Ratnavali* Sagarika, the heroine endeavours to commit suicide by placing a noose round her neck and in the *Mrichchhakatika* Vasantsena is strangled by Shakar in the Pushpakaranda garden and left for dead. Other instances can be cited from other dramas.

It is true that some later authorities on Sanskrit Drama mention clearly that death should not be presented but it does not appear to have been a universally accepted principle. Thus Ramachandra Suri says in his *Natya-Darpan*—"मरणं न प्रयुञ्जीत", "Death should not be staged"; Vishwanatha in his *Sahitya-Darpan* "रसविच्छेदहेतुत्वान्मरणं नैव वर्ण्यते" "Death is not brought about as it mars the development of the essential sentiment" but it is with regard to the *Shringar-Rasa* and not *Karun-Rasa*. Sharadatanaya clearly mentions in his *Bhava-Prakashana* that certain scholars have precluded death from being shown on the stage.

"जाड्यं मरणमित्यादि द्वे कैश्चिद्वर्जिते बुधैः"

Mark the words "कैश्चित्" in this verse. So it is evident that it was not a universally accepted principle. Why later dramatists tabooed the presentation of death on the stage requires investigation. Whether it is due to Buddhistic or Jain influences or to some artistic considerations cannot easily be determined. But from the quotation given above from the *Natya-Shastra* of Bharata urging clearly that "मरणं संप्रयोक्तव्यम्" "Death should be staged" and from what Ramachandra—a Jain Scholar says in his *Natya-Darpana* namely, "मरणं न प्रयुञ्जीत" "Death should not be staged"--it is obvious that there must have been certain influences responsible for these diametrically opposed views on the question.

From the above, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that a drama which belongs to the class of *Karuna-Rasa* or the sentiment of pathos is a tragedy. It always revolves round a calamity—which though not necessarily fatal is capable of exciting terror and pity which according to Aristotle are the essence of a tragedy. It may not be a tragedy in the full Shakespearean sense. But it cannot be called by any other name.

In Greek tragedy we see the hero and fate in conflict. In the drama *Shakuntala* we see the heroine Shakuntala in conflict with her fate. In the original story of the *Mahabharata* the caprice of King Dushyanta is responsible for creating the tragedy of Shakuntala's life but in the drama, the poet by his skilfulness has changed the plot of the story, making the curse of Durvasa account for all the cruelty that was shown to poor Shakuntala, culminating in a great disaster. This curse—as fate would have it—is neither known to Dushyanta nor to Shakuntala It becomes the pivot on which the whole tragedy turns. I have already made a reference to the fact that a curse is one of the agencies that go to evolve a tragedy in Sanskrit.

Many reviewers and commentators regard *Shakuntala* as a drama chiefly of *Shringara-Rasa* or the sentiment of love. I differ from this view. This drama—though it deals with the sentiment of love, is predominantly a drama of pathos or *Karuna-Rasa*. I consider it essentially a tragedy, as the very feeling of love has received such a hard blow in this play, which though not fatal, is no less tragic and painful.

If a cure, after all, is found out for a fatal disease, it does not mean that because of that cure the disease becomes less terrible or less painful.

There is a traditional dictum, the purport of which is that in developing the sentiment of pathos the *Uttar-Ramacharita* of Bhavabhuti is a drama of unsurpassed excellence. That may be so but in our opinion with all its remarkable wealth of soul-stirring poetry, the pathos of *Uttar-Ramacharita* fails to come up to that climax to which the *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa leads. The pathos of this situation is deep and touching. Technically one may not call it a tragedy and yet it is a great tragedy. The happiness which comes in the end—is not only unexpected but appears to be bereft of all beauty and charm. Death is not the only agency that can turn a drama into tragedy. As a man can live a life of abject misery compared to which death would at any time be preferable and more welcome—likewise a drama also without death can create such a wretched and shocking sorrow before which the affliction caused by death will pale into utter insignificance. When at last in this play love finds its wings of happiness it is to come down to common earth rather than to go up to its cherished heaven.

Critics often say that Act IV of *Shakuntala* is the finest and most touching. It is generally remarked with regard to this drama:—

"काव्येषु नाटकं रम्यं, तत्रापि च शकुन्तला ।
तत्रापि च चतुर्थोऽङ्कस्तत्रापि श्लोकचतुष्टयम् ॥

"Among *Kavyas* drama is beautiful; among dramas *Shakuntala* excels; in *Shakuntala* the Fourth Act and in the Fourth Act the four verses." In this Fourth Act, the poet has depicted the scene of a girl when she leaves the house of her parents and bids them farewell. Undoubtedly this is a pathetic scene. On one side parents take leave of a "sweet limb" of their own and on the other the girl bids farewell to her parents, friends, companions and the house where she spent all her childhood. This is one of the great pathetic moments in life and so there is hardly a man so stone-hearted that he will not melt into tears on such an occasion. It is really doubtful whether any poet has succeeded or will succeed in presenting this scene in such a masterly and artistic style as Kalidasa has done. He is at his best in presenting this scene vividly and artistically on the stage.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the Fourth Act of this drama is one of the finest in the whole of Sanskrit drama. But we hold that the poet has not exhibited that deep touch of pathos in this Act which he has done in the Fifth Act of this drama. The Fourth Act of *Shakuntala* is undoubtedly pathetic but the Fifth Act is most cruelly tragic. In the Fifth Act the pathos which has its beginning in the Fourth reaches its climax.

When a girl bids good-bye to her parents, her parents though sad, feel in the inmost depths of their heart a sense of satisfaction as they know that she is going to the house of her beloved or in other words to her own house. For this, blessings of continued *Soubhagya* from all quarters are bestowed on her. The girl also while feeling uneasy and unhappy, experiences deep in her heart a thrilling sensation of joy in going to her beloved. This sensation brings her consolation and comfort and instinctively makes all the pain and distress of parting from parents light and endurable. Of course this parting brings sorrow but this sorrow whispers of a delight which for the moment remains veiled like the face of a beautiful new bride. This is a sorrow which is the dawn of a new happiness that silently smiles across the corners of the tearful eyes. This is a sorrow the end of which obviously appears to be in sight. But in the Fifth Act the sorrow which has been let loose on the stage knows no end in those circumstances. Perhaps it could not be ended on earth and so the poet has had to end it in heaven. Even the smallest recollection of this sorrow makes the mind uneasy and disconsolate.

In this Fifth Act Shakuntala reaches the house of her husband— a husband who made her the sole empress of the great kingdom of his love, who regarded her as the very glory of his family:—

"परिग्रहबहुत्वेऽपि, द्वे प्रतिष्ठे कुलस्य मे ।
समुद्ररसना चोर्वी, सखी च युवयोरियम् ।।"

" Though I have many queens—yet two alone amongst them are the glory of my line; the earth wearing the girdle of the ocean and Shakuntala, this friend of yours."

She has just bidden good-bye to her father, companions and the *ashram* where she had passed all her life. The recollections of this parting scene are fresh and greatly weighing on her mind. Along with two disciples of her father and Gautami —the matron of the *ashram*—she goes to the court of King Dushyanta. Her heart is throbbing with sweet and happy emotions. She is on the way to the heaven-like place of her beloved. Who can guess her aspiring hopes and cherished feelings?

When at last she arrives at the court of King Dushyanta and is granted audience, she feels broken-hearted to find that the king does not recognize her. Oh! Who could imagine that the heart would retain its warmth and continue to work as usual even when its regular beatings had come to a dreadful stop! The King looks at Shakuntala and remains indifferent. Instead of according her a hearty welcome, he asks her bluntly who she is. And this to a woman with whom forgetting all his kingly dignity and duty he had played all sorts of love-sports just a few days before; with whom he had bound himself in a holy matrimonial alliance without the permission of her father offering his kingship as a guarantee for his sincerity. Today his seed within her womb, she comes before him and he remains completely unaffected, unconcerned and looks at her and knows not who she is. The King who used to think of her alone to the exclusion of all other objects until yesterday—does not experience any sensation in his mind even when she comes before him. That deep sea of love with its mighty rolling waves had got so suddenly dried up that not a drop was left.

What a pity! Even one's own heart is to be recognized and needs a formal introduction! The disciples who had accompanied her introduce Shakuntala to King Dushyanta and say she is Shakuntala, his lawful wife. But the King sits silent unable to know the reality and so ruthlessly puts the question, "What is the matter?" Shakuntala cannot believe her senses and is cut to the heart. "Is he speaking or emitting forth fire?" She contemplates in her mind. Poor Gautami, the matron of the *ashram* thinks that as the face of Shakuntala is covered with a veil and so the King is unable to recognize her.How could poor Gautami imagine that in fact it was the intellect of the King that was wrapped in a shroud of forgetfulness. She desires to remove the veil from the face of Shakuntala saying:-

"जाते ! मुहूर्त्तं मा लज्जस्व । अपनेष्यामि तावत्तेऽवगुण्ठनम् । ततस्त्वां भर्त्ताभिज्ञास्यति ।"

" Child! lay aside for a while your bashfulness. I remove the veil so that your husband may recognize you."

The veil is accordingly taken off and the King sees Shakuntala face to face. For a brief spell, the beauty of the face of Shakuntala fascinates him but with all its unblemished loveliness, it fails to lift the cloud off his mind—which alone would have made recognition possible. Shakuntala now begins to bewail her fate. On the spur of the moment she recollects a token—the ring, which was presented to her by the King and a hope comes back to warm her heart. But sooner than she imagined she is disillusioned to discover that the ring is no more on her finger—as perhaps it had slipped off while she offered homage to the water of Shachiteertha. Here her ill-fate also appears to have conspired with the curse of Durvasa to precipitate a disaster which otherwise could easily have been averted. If the poet had intended to make this drama a comedy—he would not have made Shakuntala lose that token of recognition whereby all misgivings about her would have been dissipated at once. It is clear that by doing so Kalidasa wanted to close all avenues of saving Shakuntala from the impending catastrophe. Hitherto Shakuntala was helpless but now she becomes hopeless. "What is the use of recalling to his mind the recollections of our sweet love when I myself stand unrecognized and condemned?" she whispers. This hopelessness makes her desperate and bold. Shakuntala boldly begins to unbosom the sweet tale of their love and his attachment for her, but to no purpose: It was all hoping against hope. The King remains absolutely unmoved, unconcerned and cold and adds fuel to the fire, callously remarking that these are the fanciful fabrications of her own mind. With this he shows his utter inability to take her into his house under any plea.

Gautami feels greatly perplexed and cannot decide as to what should be done. The disciples of the sage think that their duty was only to take Shakuntala to her husband and it being done they have no right to interfere. It rests now entirely with her husband whether to give her shelter or not. After making this decision they set out for their *ashram* without uttering a word of consolation to Shakuntala. Poor, helpless, broken-hearted, Shakuntala writhing with shame and agony, driven to utter dispair wants to follow them but they also in their turn rebuke her at the top of their voice in such cruel, shocking and painful terms that she becomes horrified and benumbed.

"किं पुरोभागे ! स्वातंत्र्यमवलम्बसे।"

"यदि यथा वदति क्षितिपस्तथा,
त्वमसि किं पितुरुत्कलया त्वया।
अथ तु वेत्सि शुचि व्रतमात्मनः,
पतिकुले तव दास्यमपि क्षमम् ॥"

"O! You wanton girl! do you wish to assume independence?"

"If you are such as the King says, you are a disgrace to the family of your father. What can your father do with you? But if you believe that you are true and your conduct irreproachable, it is up to you to pass your life even as a slave in the house of your husband."

In the first place she is not recognized when she goes to him; then even after introduction she is not recognized; then the veil is removed from her face and the King sees her face to face. She fascinates him but is not recognized; then the ring on which she pins all her hopes is discovered to be missing causing despair and helplessness; and then taking courage she unbosoms the tale of their mutual sweet love without creating any impression on his mind and he not only does not recognize her but also repudiates all the stories and refuses to take her into his house on any pretext and finally her own kith and kin also repudiate her in a most appalling manner and are not prepared to allow her to accompany them. In this way the flood of pathos rises till at last it overflows its banks sweeping away everything before it.

The unkindness displayed by Shakuntala's own people in refusing to take her along with them is as unexpected as it is inhuman. Perhaps without it the whole scene would not have reached the height of cruel pathos. Their's was "the unkindest cut of all." Now what should Shakuntala do? Where should she go? Neither her husband nor her own people are prepared to give her shelter. Shakuntala, who is pregnant—has been ruthlessly spurned by her husband and her people alike. Though she has a father, poor Shakuntala becomes worse than an orphan and despite the fact that she has her husband—she becomes worse than a widow. We do not know if any other poet has depicted a scene of such miserable helplessness in any play. She has no place to live on this earth. She begins to cry aloud throwing up her hands and praying to Mother Earth to open a grave for her. "भगवति, वसुधे देहि मे विवरम्." If she had been killed, her condition would have been no worse. At long last to relieve her of this unbearable agony, her mother Menaka descends like a flash of lightning and takes her child to heaven.

The poet has drawn his heroine from a holy hermitage. so that her transparent innocence, unquestionable chastity, utter simplicity and total ignorance of evil or sin may make this story all the more pathetic. The description of her matchless beauty, the picturesque portrayal of their spontaneous love and the fact that she was pregnant add to the pity that we feel for her. And on the top of it comes this cruelty which being unintended appears to be innocent—as it is the outcome of the curse of Durvasa. And therefore it operates with the force and blindness of a machine. It is really doubtful whether the King in his senses could ever descend to such depths of inhumanity wilfully.

We have given this part of the story in detail in order to clearly set forth our view-point. Does the pathetic scene of the Fourth Act bear any comparison to that of the Fifth? The former appears to be nothing but a short prelude to the latter. The scene in the Fifth Act is so shocking and terrible that we can hardly conjure up a similar scene in any other play to match it.

When in the Sixth Act Dushyanta gets the ring that he had presented to Shakuntala and his memory of her comes back to him, he vividly calls up that picture of Shakuntala when she stood condemned and deserted by all:—

"इतः प्रत्यादेशात्स्वजनमनुगन्तुं व्यवसिता,
स्थिता तिष्ठेत्युच्चैर्वदति गुरुशिष्ये गुरुसमे ।
पुनर्दृष्टिं वाष्पप्रसरकलुषामर्पितवती,
मयि क्रूरे यत्तत्सविषमिव शल्यं दहति माम् ॥"

"When I had discarded her she attempted to follow her relatives but those relatives, the disciples of the sage in burning wrath bade her stop and thus they also discarded her. Then again she cast a glance at my cruel self, her eyes dim with the flowing tears. It is this glance that haunts me and pains me like the point of an arrow touched with poison."

This painful and haunting glance, full of tears reflecting utter helplessness—is the Shakuntala of Kalidasa. This sorrowful girl discarded both by her husband and her own relatives and who receives no support from any quarter and owns no place to live in this world is the *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa. This *Shakuntala* is a magnificent living picture of the infinite helplessness and irremediable weakness of womankind. Having visualized this, the tears that have spontaneously gushed forth from the eyes of the poet have become transformed into this pathetic drama. Nature has set certain limitations to woman which man always takes advantage of, and poor woman is helplessly and hopelessly left to her sad fate. We are not sure whether even in this age woman has found out any effective remedy which while providing a perfect safeguard for her inherent and inescapable weakness may uphold her honour intact and inviolate.

It may be contended that if Dushyanta could not recognize his beloved, it was due to the curse of Durvasa and so he cannot be held responsible for all that followed. Of course it is the curse which has chiefly played havoc in this play, which —as stated above is one of the sources of the sentiment of pathos. In this article, we do not desire to deal with this issue, though from the study of the *Mahabharata*, Dushyanta on no pretext can be exonerated from this guilt. In the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* it is clearly set forth that though Dushyanta fully recognized Shakuntala he disclaimed all knowledge of her.

> " सोऽथ श्रुत्वैव तद्वाक्यं, तस्या राजा स्मरन्नपि ।
> अब्रवीन्न स्मरामीति.............."

" After listening to what she said, the King in spite of fully recognizing her, disowned her."

But is it possible that such a love as this, can ever be forgotten or eclipsed or does it require any recognition? Does it call for evidence like that of a ring to evoke its sweet memory? It is just as if we should run for a small candle to see the brilliance of the Sun. What else can be more surprising and painful than to find that when his beloved in person stands face to face before him, the chords of his heart remain untouched but with the recovery of the ring all the memory of her comes home to him. It is as though he identified the ring but not his own sweetheart. The very necessity of a means to call back the memory of that ever refreshing and unforgettable love proves it to be false, untrustworthy and deplorable.

Kalidasa with his ingenious skill has so cast the plot that the whole phenomenon assumes a totally different complexion. The curse of Durvasa figures as the most potent thing in this drama but in fact it becomes a blessing in disguise. With the recovery of the ring the poet breathes a sigh of relief, brings their union into the pale of possibility and the curse of the sage becomes ineffective. In the sky of the mind of Dushyanta gathers a storm of the memory of Shakuntala and there flows a heavy downpour of tears through his eyes. He weeps despairingly without any solace. He cannot undo what he has done. He feels stunned and cannot believe that he could become so cruel as to disavow his own self.

Dushyanta would never have been able to know the atrocity that he had so cruelly perpetrated on Shakuntala—had not the effect of the curse been removed with the recovery of the ring. It is through the intervention of Indra that the poet has not allowed the reaction to run its full course; otherwise it needs little imagination to guess what extremes this unending and irremediable sorrow would have led Dushyanta to. Matali, the charioteer of Indra, takes him to heaven and there with the help of the gods and supernatural forces, the hope of their union which to all intents and purposes had died out, comes to life again.

In the Seventh Act, on the Hemakuta mountain in heaven in the midst of beautiful nymphs, Dushyanta sees first his own child and then Shakuntala with her hair uncombed and tied into a single knot. He falls down at her feet as if to beg forgiveness. Shakuntala prays him to get up. She accuses her own fate. In the course of their conversation she wants to know how after all she, an unhappy being, was recognized. The King recounts the whole story—showing the ring and requests her to wear that again on her finger. To this she gives a very significant reply:—

"नास्य विश्वसिमि। आर्यपुत्र एवैतद्धारयतु।"

"I have lost all faith in it. My lord should himself wear it now."

Thus she inflicts a hard punishment on the ring by refusing to wear it on her finger, though if the ring had not been recovered the curse of Durvasa also would not have been revoked.

But when love itself can be forgotten, what trust can be reposed in petty articles like the ring.? The love which does not make itself felt like one's own life—can never be characterized as love. The proof of love should be the spontaneous joy that it brings to the heart, the colour that it lends to the cheeks and the lustre that it imparts to the eyes and not petty articles like the ring. The love which does not become itself a haunting memory and which is not its own proof must be called by some other name. As light always reveals itself and in no way can it conceal itself—likewise love also always reveals itself and in no way can it conceal itself. About love the following words of Kabir, a great saint and a great poet of Hindi are remarkably true:—

"प्रेम छिपाया ना छिपे, जा घट परघट होय।
जै पै मुख बोलै नहीं, नैन देत हैं रोय॥"

"When love once reveals itself, however one may try, it can never be concealed. If the mouth speaks not, the eyes brim with tears."

In this drama this love has become eclipsed and so the calamity that has played havoc would have gone to the farthest limit if with the abrogation of the curse it did not spring into life. And though in this way the calamity has been averted, yet the shock that it gives and the terror that it strikes, are too painful to be set at rest. The poet, as though to cross the waters of this great sorrow, makes the curse of Durvasa a safe vessel. With the help of this vessel, he on the other side of the earth—in heaven—has been able to bring about a happiness which on earth he would not have been able to build. In this happy union, is on one side Shakuntala, the very image of pathos and on the other Dushyanta, smitten with the grief of repentance. Between these two, the poet places their son—a gift of their love and thus takes off the edge of the mortifying sorrow. Plainly speaking this happiness appears to be more a heavenly phenomenon than an earthly one. Therefore its divine illumination coming from above lights up silently this great tragedy that has been enacted below. That is why even after the union of Shakuntala and Dushyanta we do not feel completely relieved of our sorrow and that doleful melody continues to reverberate in our minds. We think that although Shakuntala and Dushyanta are united there is a possibility of such a calamity falling to the lot of others who are not so fortunate as the hero and heroine of this drama, and this possibility revives our tragic feelings of pity and terror. The question comes before us what would have been the result if that ring had not been recovered. Thus the poet presents before us the case of those poor, innocent women who have been—not through any fault of their own—cruelly treated by their wicked and treacherous fate and are in the state of utter desolation and helplessness. Though this drama is apparently a comedy the happiness that it brings in the end appears to be uneasy and dissatisfied with itself. It seems—as though the outer body of this drama is constituted of happiness but the soul that dwells in it is made up of a tormenting sorrow which is " too deep for tears."

THE ART OF KALIDASA IN *URVASHI*

In the vast firmament of Sanskrit drama the *Urvashi* of Kalidasa shines like a star which with its soft brilliance, gentle majesty and exquisite loveliness catches the eye and imagination of the whole world. Out of a vague, small and uneventful legendary tale and oft-repeated and commonplace theme the poet has ingeniously laboured to evolve an artistic beauty which is new in conception, romantic in appeal and elusive in realization. The indefinable phases of extremely tender, subtle and powerful emotions and passions of the human heart have found a picturesque and colourful reflection in this sweet poetic drama, *Urvashi*—just as the flying vapours of clouds do in the variegated hues of a smiling rainbow.

Great poets with their resourceful imagination and singular tastes and talents develop specific tendencies which, however odd and ludicrous, not only impart a new interest to their creations but also later on give birth to novel literary symbols and conspicuous conventions. These tendencies, in the main, result from the objects, phenomena and situations in which they seem to take unlimited interest, as also from their specific way of thinking and individual style of expression. The very prospect of these objects and events sends their minds into creative raptures like the earth when it receives the exhilarating touch of the first showers of rain. Through the casement of *Urvashi* one can easily catch a glimpse of those situations and things which Kalidasa felt a great attraction for; which always inspired his vision and set his fancy to work and in which his interest never grew stale or weary.

Of all his dramas *Urvashi* is the shortest though, of course, it also consists of five Acts. In the outline of its plot and also in some other features, *Urvashi* bears a very close resemblance both to *Malavika* and *Shakuntala* but it should not be concluded therefrom, as it has unfortunately been, that old age had so dulled the vision and weakened the talents of the poet that he could no more display the original and astonishing feats of his fancy and so had to remain content with making repetitions of the same old achievements. In his ambition to compose some thing new he only wove the same old patterns with a slight change in colour and texture.

In spite of the apparent analogy between the various lineaments and aspects in the works of a genius there always exists an essential and deep difference that becomes discernible only by close and repeated study. Being the works of the same artist it is but meet that they possess certain similar features, but what is worth studying is not so much their similarity that comes to notice very easily, as their diversity that needs for its discovery hard and patient labour and deep and original thinking. The real charm of a work of art lies in bringing about a handsome uniformity between its various divergent elements but its true appreciation lies in the realization of the distinct nature of each.

There are many varieties of Sanskrit drama and *Urvashi* is classified as a *trotaka* and not a *nataka*. It is very difficult to find out what is exactly connoted by the term *trotaka*. Sometimes even the meaning of a root out of which a word takes its form and hue does not provide a key to its clear meaning. Nor is it possible for us to gather any adequate information about the historical growth of this term even from its various definitions and interpretations. Moreover in the whole field of Sanskrit drama this is the only *trotaka* available. In *Vachaspatyam* the name of one more *trotaka* is given, stated to have consisted of seven acts. Its name is *Stambhita-Rambham*. As the book is not available, nothing can be said about it. Had there been many *trotakas* in Sanskrit—it would have been much easier to have a more precise notion of the nature of this term.

It is obvious that by writing a *trotaka* instead of a *nataka* the poet had probably intended to hit upon some thing which was new and not in vogue at that time. The poet, while admittedly retaining some of the minor features of his old works, has in *Urvashi* struck upon an innovation which has given a new interest and life to his apparently old themes. The same song pitched in different keys and sung in different tunes and ways, evokes altogether different feelings and emotions and imparts to its contents a new colour, rhythm, associations and expressions. With a change in the background the same scenes in this drama seem to assume a totally different complexion, put on an unfamiliar appearance and bear an altogether new meaning. Whatever be the other aspects and dramatic significance of this innovation, it has certainly ensured to the poet a much wider scope to work out his fancy more freely and boldly. Of all his dramas ".Urvashi" is the most romantic and poetic. It is couched in a suggestive vagueness that makes its beauty veiled and its meaning elusive.

Trotaka is that type of drama which closely knits together the fortunes both of human and heavenly beings. The play that seeks to describe the rhythmical emotions and buoyant passions of the beings situated so differently must needs be in the very fitness of things profoundly imaginative; it must weave a tale which is sure to be extravagantly romantic; its scenes must obviously radiate with such colours as are too gay and flamboyant to reflect their purpose and meaning. In our opinion in no drama of Kalidasa, are his musical notes so sweet and poignant, his vision so pleasant and happy and the flights of his fancy so exuberant and marked as in the drama of *Urvashi*.

There is an additional point pertaining to this drama, which has been almost overlooked. There are two recensions that are found of this play.

One comes from the North and the other from the South. The Northern recension has been commented on by Ranganatha and the Southern by Raja Katayavema. In the Northern recension, we find in the Fourth Act some musical verses written in *Apabhransha*. They are to be sung in a peculiar fashion and mode and are accompanied with operatic dancing. The Southern recension does not contain these verses. Due to this fact many scholars believe that these verses are interpolations; but the reasons they advance are hardly convincing. It must be admitted, however, that these musical verses indicate a systematic knowledge of the technique of the Indian opera.

In this play it appears as if the earth is in the close and blissful embrace of heaven. As rain comes down to draw out from the bosom of the earth its stored-up splendours, likewise Urvashi comes down from the Elysian fields to call into play the colourful feelings and emotions, treasured in the human heart of Pururava. Generally it is believed that love is of heaven, not of earth. It is an experience through which man attains divinity. But the poet seems to suggest in this drama that love is an earthly phenomenon for which even the gods take a fancy. They feel so much enamoured of it that they happily come down from heaven to live on earth like common human beings. The poet in the characters of Urvashi and Pururava has linked heaven and earth in a golden bond of love which while being exquisitely delicate is in no way fragile. The *Urvashi* of Kalidasa is a celestial image of that earthly love which is both a fantastic dream and a graceful reality; an impulsive vagueness and an enduring necessity; a whimsical infatuation and a delightful sublimity; a youthful romance and an abiding devotion.

Nebulous feelings of appreciation and sympathy finding their roots in strange and uncommon circumstances of chivalrous bravery first sprout into delicious emotions and after enjoying the warmth of spontaneous and reciprocal favour they blossom out into a strong passion of love. Pururava, the great king, like a gallant knight rescues Urvashi from the clutches of the demon Keshi who had taken her prisoner while she was returning from the Palace of Kubera. As he brings her back to her friends and companions in his chariot they come into close contact and this awakens in their minds such piquant feelings and emotions reciprocally as perforce change the course of their lives and culminates in an inconceivable life-long relation.

How imperious, intense and overpowering must be the feeling swayed by which Urvashi joyfully renounces all the freedom and happiness she enjoyed in heaven and comes down to earth to share the lot of common human beings! And who was this Urvashi? She was the pride of heaven; she was so beautiful that she was called a jewel of paradise. She was the most delicate weapon of Indra, the lord of heaven, with which he used to strike those who were ambitious and practised all sorts of severe austerities to attain his lofty status. The purpose of her life was to stir up those delicious dreams of beauty and youth enraptured with which a man could never hope to be rescued from his earthly surroundings. Urvashi while displaying the uncommon glories of heaven always endeavoured to fasten the destinies of man to earth. It appears that Urvashi in the form of pure and divine nectar had to offer nothing but an unmixed and earthly poison.

Divinities are supposed to be above human susceptibilities. That is to say they remain absolutely untouched by those tender and vehement emotions and passions that generally torment the mind of men. They kindle a flame of passion in the breast of man never letting a spark of it fall on them. But how is it possible for those who always play with fire to escape its disastrous effects? The freedom that knows only to fetter others, cannot remain itself unfettered for a long time. That is the reason why Urvashi falls a helpless victim to those very emotions and passions that she used to provoke vehemently in the minds of others. That " delicate weapon " of Indra is so unerringly hit by a weapon which was perhaps more delicate and with its one gentle stroke she falls down on earth. She loses all her appetite for heaven. She ardently desires to cast her lot with Pururava. She becomes quite oblivious of her chequered past and celestial position and thinks about herself in terms of an ordinary human being. However unrestrained and free a life she might have led while she was in heaven, when she comes to earth she gives up all her volatile disposition and wilfully binds herself in holy matrimonial alliance to Pururava. Whatever undesirable roles she might have played under the specific instructions of Indra, for which she could not be held solely responsible, when she comes to her own and guides her own destinies it is no exaggeration to say that she attains purity and becomes an inspiring ideal of chaste and faithful love. She does not remain celestial, she becomes human. In the celestial body of Urvashi there begins to throb a heart which is human. While Urvashi was in heaven she was adored only on account of her matchless beauty but when she descends on earth she becomes as virtuous as she is beautiful. And so we find that the graceful flower of beauty which was apparently devoid of all fragrance becomes replete with the fascinating fragrance of human love. Formerly she was all beauty but now she becomes all love. As a poem, however figurative, musical and harmonious, is of little purpose, if it fails to embody a truth, likewise human beauty however perfect and rare if it is not inspired with a virtuous, chaste and faithful love is of no earthly value. Urvashi does not feel that pride in being the foremost fairy of the court of Indra which she does in becoming an ordinary wife of King Pururava.

Her mind is so crowded with the sweet and happy associations of her gallant saviour that all her soul stands out boldly to proclaim to the whole world in no uncertain terms her deep attachment and marked constancy to King Pururava. When consciousness becomes submerged in subconsciousness the entire being begins to work as though under a strong hypnotic spell. It is perhaps due to this reason that Urvashi is betrayed into such errors as she would never have committed otherwise. The *Lakshmi-Svayambara* drama, written by Bharat-Muni is being enacted after a good many rehearsals, in a theatre of heaven. In this drama, Urvashi acts the part of Lakshmi and Menaka of Varuni. In one of the most fascinating scenes when the story takes an interesting turn, Menaka puts this question to Urvashi:

> "सखि, समागता एते त्रैलोक्यसुपुरुषाः सकेशवाश्च लोकपालाः ।
> कतमस्मिंस्ते भावाभिनिवेश इति ।"

"Friend, here have assembled all the great persons in the three worlds and the lords of all quarters along with Keshava. On whom is your affection fixed?"

At that most psychological moment, Urvashi forgets that she is playing the part of Lakshmi on the stage; forgets that before her are seated in the theatre all the prominent persons of Heaven and God Vishnu Himself; forgets her situation and position and in that happy state of forgetfulness, instead of Purushotham there escapes from her lips the name of Pururava, her real lover.

> "ततस्तया पुरुषोत्तम इति भणितव्ये पुरूरवसीति निर्गता वाणी ।"

What further proof is required to show her deep attachment to Pururava? This feeling of love has made her absolutely oblivious of everything—even of her own self—and sweeping away all odds and obstacles in one breath, it has suddenly burst forth on the stage like a fresh spring of water, from the bottom of her heart. There was not much difference between the two words—"Purushottama" and "Pururava"—"Puru" being common and intial in both the words. This must have afforded her an easy chance to slip into the error to which her feelings and emotions also must have inclined her. And in this way her long-cherished feelings forge a way out and take their own course to secure their objective. They make easy and possible in a moment what would have been difficult and impossible otherwise. Bharat-Muni, the director of the play feels displeased and in a fit of frantic indignation rebukes her and pronounces a curse on her thereby depriving her of her residence in heaven. Indra, entering well into her feelings, permits her to live happily on earth with King Pururava, till she gets an offspring. The ways of destiny are strange and inscrutable and so what was regarded a curse becomes to her a great blessing in disguise.

She is so over head and ears in love with Pururava that when the time of her departure for heaven arrives she wants to postpone it indefinitely by managing to keep her only son out of sight. Strangely enough she never lets Pururava know that he has become father of a child. She is prepared to part with her only child but not with Pururava. Intensity of feeling and purpose could hardly work its way to a higher pitch.

This may sound unnatural and impossible but truth is always stranger than fiction. And when all natural and possible avenues become closed there remains no option but to attempt what is regarded as unnatural and impossible.

Of all the loves presented on the stage by Kalidasa the love of Urvashi and Pururava is the most dramatic, romantic and classic. In every detail and phase it is richly colourful, and devotedly steadfast. Like a river it shapes its own course. It is like that blissful deliverance having attained which there remains nothing further to be achieved. It is the very breath of their lives. Therefore Indra feels constrained to revise his former decision and permits them to live together as long as they are endowed with life.

And when such a love as this is not allowed to work its own destiny and some insuperable obstacle raises its ugly head to interrupt its irresistible course it is natural if it becomes enraged, loses all its equanimity and pitifully resolves itself into a fit of fearful madness and struggles against heavy odds to go forth on its destined journey. As the current of a mighty river when its course is forcefully resisted recoils in rage and fury and struggles to forge its way ahead through the highrising, mad and tumultuous waves likewise when the feeling of love is denied its own course it becomes sadly unmanageable, loses fast its equilibrium and, wrestles to find its way with all its fearful strength to its cherished goal. In *Urvashi* Kalidasa has employed all his skill to call up on the stage vividly and artistically this aspect of love which is as delicate as it is intense. Pururava and Urvashi are so fond of each other that they do not wish to miss each other's company even for a single moment. The poet could not have portrayed the touching softness and consummate fullness of their feeling if he had allowed their course of life to run in the same calm and undisturbed manner. Therefore he brings about their separation abruptly and unexpectedly. And from this separation springs a deep pain, an unbearable agony and a pathetic madness that eventually unroll themselves in this poetical drama.

Whenever I go through the pages of *Urvashi* it strikingly puts me in mind of the beautiful poem *Megha-Duta*. The ideas, sentiments, feelings and emotions the poet has been able to breathe into that great lyrical poem, have been set to new music in this luscious drama. Probably he wrote this drama after he had composed *Megha-Duta*. In *Megha-Duta*. a *Yaksha*, an attendant of Kubera, having been separated from his wife for a year beholds the sky darkening and all of a sudden his mind becomes so full of the sweet memories of his beloved that he becomes deprived of all his senses and with some wild flowers in his hands he approaches the first cloud of *Ashadha* to beg of it to carry his message of life and love to his forlorn sweetheart. In *Urvashi* the nymph in a frantic fit of jealousy and anger leaves

Pururava suddenly and unexpectedly when they are treading on the enchanted ground of youth and happiness and its reaction on his mind is so great and depressing that he gets confused, and loses all his wits. To him everything appears to be nothing but an eluding phantom of Urvashi. In clouds, in trees, in meadows, in mountains, in rivers, in animals and in birds he tries to find his evasive fair companion. He feels her charming presence everywhere but cannot get hold of her anywhere. He pries into every hole and corner in order to find her. In his excited and wild mood he inquires strangely and raves pathetically about her. In torrential rain, in thick and dark forests he wanders in search of Urvashi. He is at a loss to know how and when Urvashi disappeared. She came like a dream and disappeared like a dream. What in *Megha-Duta* has been presented in the form of a poem has been brought about in the form of this drama. In *Megha-Duta* the *Yaksha* knows where his love is and therefore it strikes his imagination to send a message to her but in *Urvashi* the king is not aware of the whereabouts of his beloved, she having disappeared abruptly and without any apparent reason. In *Megha-Duta* the *Yaksha* gives a graphic description of the way leading to his house at *Alka-puri* but in *Urvashi* the king has to rove day and night in order to seek her place of hiding. And this has rendered the whole situation all the more delicate and touching.

The poet has depicted this scene in the Fourth Act. The beauty of *Urvashi* is not to be sought so much in its plot or in its commonplace story as in the natural and wild play of the most delicate and intense feelings and emotions that both disturb and delight the human mind. This Act is full of tender and colourful poetry, soft and sweet music, picturesque and inspiring scenery and strange and pathetic situations. It brings home to us, in a peculiar manner, the objects and phenomena in which the poet seems to take specific interest and which seem to show his poetic personality. In no work of Kalidasa do we experience the touch of his entertaining personality so closely as in the Fourth Act of this play. Undoubtedly this is an outstanding landmark in the domain both of drama and poetry. Hamboldt, a great German orientalist has rightly remarked: "The scene in the forest, which he introduced in the drama of *Vikrama* and *Urvashi*, is one of the most beautiful and poetical productions which has appeared in any time."

Pururava and Urvashi are gone to "Gandharva-Madana-Vana" to enjoy their honeymoon and there in the joyful surroundings of the most pleasant forest scenery they devote every minute of their precious time to the enjoyment of various sorts of love-sports. For the consummate enjoyment of youth it is necessary to go to places where everything presents a spectacle of overflowing joy and beauty, where the whole atmosphere seems to be breathing an air of immortal hope and youthful pleasure. There one day while both of them are playing mirthfully on the sandy banks of Mandakini the eyes of the King are diverted, as a

Vidyadhari, daughter of a demigod, appears on the scene. She sports by building hillocks of sand. The King fixes his eyes on her sweet face appreciatively for some time and this causes great resentment in the heart of Urvashi. She becomes blind with jealousy. The King offers many explanations and apologies but Urvashi is not in a mood to listen to them. The King is unable to console her. In blind anger she leaves the place disdainfully and enters that portion of the forest which was called as *Kumar-Vana*. Kumar Kartikaya had laid down a rule that no woman should enter that part of the forest and if any woman transgressed the rule she would at once be transformed into a creeper. As soon as Urvashi enters that part of the forest she gets transformed into a creeper and becomes fixed to the spot. The King, bewildered and dismayed, begins to wander like a forlorn wind in a stormy night in the forest in order to look about for her. In the meantime the sky becomes darkened with heavy clouds and it begins to rain. Pururava is at his wit's end and while everything that comes before him promises to let him know about her, it does not provide any clue about her. This renders him utterly confused and half-witted, and dark clouds and sharp rain send him into a fearful fit of stark madness. It is inconceivable to him that Urvashi could ever desert him. In pouring rain, in his queer dress, talking wildly he wanders day and night in the forest from one place to another. To a cuckoo, swan, bee, deer, elephant, mountain, cloud, river, and everything that he comes across, he puts only one question in a very pathetic manner, " Do you know any thing about my Urvashi? "

He beholds in front of him a cloud rising from the high peaks of a mountain resplendent with a streak of lightning and a rainbow pouring down heavy showers of rain, and he takes it to be a huge black demon carrying away his darling Urvashi, showering a volley of sharp arrows from his bow drawn to its utmost length, but soon he realizes his whimsical mistake. As all his thoughts are centred on Urvashi he sees nothing but Urvashi first in everything that presents itself before him only to discover later that it was but a happy illusion of his own wishful thinking. His elaborate searches—one after another—prove to be nothing but wistful delusions and deriding will-o' the wisps but undaunted and undismayed by his sad failures he goes on struggling with his fate to achieve his object. In his fantastic and visionary mood he finds every object bearing a very close resemblance in its appearance to Urvashi and therefore he talks with it in the most free and familiar manner. His questions, guessed answers, remarks, ravings, illusions and visions, while they tell their own interesting tale, bring forth a beauty which is picturesquely delicate. In the resounding echo emerging out of the caves of a mountain the poet has skilfully used such words as make both a question and an answer. As he sees a mountain river he takes it at once to be his Urvashi and gives vent to his thoughts and feelings in the following words:

"तरङ्गभ्रूभङ्गा क्षुभितविहगश्रेणिरशना,
विकर्षन्ती फेनं वसनमिव संरम्भशिथिलम् ।

यथाविद्धं याति स्खलितमभिसंधाय बहुशो,
नदीभावेनेयं ध्रुवमसहना सा परिणता ॥ "

" Knitting its eye-brows in the form of ripples, wearing the girdle of the row of the agitated birds, dragging along its foamy garment loosened on account of anger and confusion—as it meanders—revolving my fault repeatedly, I think this is without any doubt the same indignant Urvashi transformed into a river."

But second thoughts bring home to him that it must be truly a river for Urvashi will never proceed towards the sea abandoning Pururava. At long last he procures "संगमनीय - मणि "—a jewel that is sure to bring union with one's beloved in a very short time. With this jewel in his hand he approaches the same creeper into which Urvashi was transformed. As he looks attentively at the creeper the idea flashes across his mind that it must be his real Urvashi. He goes and embraces it fondly and experiences the same thrilling delight which he felt when he used to be folded in her arms. He feels so much transported with joy that he shuts his eyes and does not wish to open them again for he is afraid that this also may turn out to be a fantastic delusion, robbing him of life-giving pleasure. He says in that joyful strain:

" समर्थये यत्प्रथमं प्रियां प्रति,
क्षणेन तन्मे परिवर्ततेऽन्यथा
अतो बिनिद्रे सहसा विलोचने,
करोमि न स्पर्शविभावितप्रियः "

"Whatever at first I regard as my love, in an instant proves to be otherwise. Therefore I feel reluctant to open my eyes all at once as this ethereal touch makes me believe that at last I have found my beloved."

This reminds us of a beautiful *Doha* of Kabir, a great mystic poet of Hindi written perhaps in similar circumstances:

"सपने में साईं मिले, सोवत लिया जगाय ।
आँखि न खोलूँ डरपता, मत सपना ह्वै जाय ।।"

"I found my lord in a dream. It awakened me from my deep slumber. Now I feel afraid to open my eyes, lest it should turn out to be a dream."

Gradually he opens his eyes and in this gradual opening of the eyes there is a pleasure which becomes doubly more intense as we feel it. The whole situation shadows forth a charm which only Kalidasa could create. As the creeper receives the touch of "संगमनीय - मणि" the "the Re-union-jewel" she at once regains her former form and when Pururava opens his eyes he finds Urvashi standing before him like a sweet dream changed into a delightful reality. After a brief discussion the veil of the mystery is lifted and they come to be acquainted with the true facts. In this way their lost joys and hopes return and their interest in life is revived. Urvashi wears that union-jewel on her forehead, and it lends a new charm to her superb loveliness.

In the Fifth Act the poet brings about the union of the king with his son Ayu, born of Urvashi. Ever since he was born, he was placed in an Ashram under the scrupulous care of some distinguished women ascetics. As Indra had allowed Urvashi to remain with Pururava till she had an offspring, Urvashi never lets Pururava know anything about the child. It is a matter of no less wonder than of delight when the secret is revealed to the king. The poet creates conditions wherein Ayu cannot be allowed to live in the Ashram and so perforce is brought back to the royal palace. Now the time arrives when Urvashi with a heavy heart and against her wishes sets about to bid farewell to Pururava and to fly up to heaven. The king contemplates to retire into the forest as without Urvashi he does not seem to have any interest in his life and kingdom. In the meantime Narada comes down from heaven with a message from Indra, announcing that the latter has permitted Urvashi to remain with Pururava as long as he lives. Amidst happy scenes the young prince Ayu is installed as the heir-apparent. In this way the cherished desires of Pururava and Urvashi bear happy fruit and here the drama comes to a close.

Some critics regard the beauty of the Fourth Act as too delicate to be produced on the stage and therefore in their opinion it is undramatic. This misunderstanding has arisen simply because Sanskrit dramas are no more played on the stage. In other words we can say that the scenes of the Fourth Act are so exquisitely tender that it appears almost impossible to represent them on the stage. In fact their fascinating delicacy will be realized and appreciated more when they are aptly represented on stage. There is no doubt that if this drama is produced properly on the stage, it will evoke such emotional and imaginative delight as will scarcely find a parallel even in this age when the histrionic art has been perfected as never before.

ABDUR RAHIM KHANKHANAN AND HIS HINDI POETRY

The poetry of Abdur Rahim Khankhanan is as indistinguishable and inseparable from his actual life as colour and fragrance are from a flower. It possesses the same dignity, nobility and sensitiveness which marked his own disposition and character. As it is the light of the sun that gives lustre to the moon, similarly it is the personality of Abdur Rahim Khankhanan that gives all the beauty and charm to his poetry. With some poets their art is superior to their personal attainments but with Abdur Rahim the opposite is the case. His personality is more picturesque and grand than his poetry. God reveals Himself through His creation and a great creative genius brings out his own self in the rhythmical feats of his fancy and art.

The life-story of a poet and for that matter a great man is worse than useless if it does not inspire our vision and fancy. It is his greatness that unfolds itself in the sublimity of art and action and thereby charms our conception. All his story will be useless if it does not bring us face to face with his immeasurable self. Everything insignificant and small, dull and uneventful attains beauty and colour, meaning and importance in the light of his infinite personality.

It is curious how certain stories about the high and great get afloat in the air and become the talk of people of all classes for generations. They look, on their very face, strange and incredible and yet everybody takes them for granted as though instinctively and does not feel disposed to disbelieve them totally or dismiss them as altogether untrue. Is not greatness itself fantastic and therefore unbelievable? If it had been believable how could it inspire our wonder? Greatness by nature is elusive and indefinable and the human intellect finds it impossible to understand it in terms simple and familiar, and when it tries to attain the unattainable the supernatural in man reveals itself in stories of fantastic and unbelievable nature.

The name of Khankhanan is as well known in the history of the Moghul period in India as in that of Hindi literature. He was a man of genius and a man of action. He was both a poet and a soldier. He was as mighty in wielding his sword as his pen. There appears to be some inevitable connection between the career of a soldier and that of a poet. His bravery on the battlefields was as romantic and classical as was his poetry in literature. No poetry is greater than true valour. About bravery Khankhanan himself remarks in one of his *dohas*:

"साधु सराहै साधुता, जती जोखिता जान ।
रहिमन साँचे सूर को, बैरी करे बखान ।।"

"A good person appreciates a good person,
And an ascetic knows an ascetic;
But true valour
Wins the admiration even of enemies."

The same thing equally applies to genuine poetry. It melts even stony hearts. He spent most of his life on battlefields. The sharp rattling of his sword found an echo in the heroic poetry of more than a dozen eminent Hindi poets. Of course a major part of it was written in an inflated style and had little biographical or historical value. It idolized him as a great hero and showed how, in trying circumstances, he valiantly fought his way to victory and success.

His name was Abdur Rahim. He was born in Lahore in 1553 A.D. "Khankhanan" was a title conferred on him by Akbar in appreciation and honour of the great services he had rendered to the king and his empire. Later on he came to be known by this name. His father Bairam Khan was a prominent figure of his own time. He made his mark as a great statesman, soldier and administrator. He was educated under the direct guidance of Akbar as a result of which he acquired a sound knowledge of Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi and some other languages and developed an outlook which was as broad as life. Abdur Rahim Khankhanan was born in an age when Hindus and Muslims had ceased to think in terms of foes or aliens, when discord and hostility had given place to amity and friendship, when differences of religion and philosophy had begun to meet in a synthetic culture and when all around was peace and prosperity.

That was a time when, after struggling hard for centuries, Hindus and Muslims had begun to yield to the forces of co-operation and good-will. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with a high and noble spirit of harmony. Before this age, there had appeared a galaxy of saints and poets who had tried to bring about unity among all classes of people by impressing upon their minds the essential oneness of God and man. But the unity of this age was of a different type. Of course the songs of Kabir, Dadu Dayal, Raidas and other *Vaishnava* poets had paved the way for it. In the former conception of unity it was regarded that all differences were formal and unnecessary, while in the other, differences had their own place and value. The unity which is achieved by removing all differences is not so valuable as the one brought about by assigning a proper place to them in life. It creates mutual appreciation and toleration without which no two persons can ever live together. In these circumstances it was natural that Hindus began to study Persian and Muslims Sanskrit and Hindi, of their own free will. Many Persian words, literary styles, metres and models found their way into Sanskrit and Hindi and similarly Hindi and Sanskrit influenced Persian thought, language and literature. Many Hindus made their contributions to Persian poetry and many Muslims enriched Sanskrit and Hindi literatures. In Hindi, practically all Sanskrit metres fell into disuse; rhyme became a regular feature of Hindi verse; poets began to insert their names in their poems: instead of four, metres were composed in two lines and short lyrical poems became popular. Although the mother-tongue of Khankhanan was Persian, he loved

Hindi with all his heart. He translated the *Life of Babar* from Turkish into Persian. It is said that Akbar was immensely pleased with this translation. He established contacts with almost all the Hindi poets of note of his time. Many would go to him every day to read their poems to him. He listened to their poems and gave them every kind of help and encouragement. Nothing was too much for him to give if only he was pleased. The advancement of Hindi poetry became the goal of his life. Many poets lived under his patronage. He gave to Ganga Kavi, a Hindi poet, 36 lakhs of rupees for one *Chhappaya* a small verse of six lines. His generosity knew no limits. It is said that he would fix one day in the year when he would give away all the wealth that he possessed. It reminds us of those great old days when great Kshatriya kings in order to celebrate their victory performed a *Yajna* (sacrifice) called by the name of *Vishvajit* in which everything that they possessed was given away. Even when he became a poor man people did not cease to go to him. He remarks in one of his *Dohas* :

"ये रहीम दर दर फिरहिं, माँगि मधुकरी खाँहि।
यारो यारी छोड़ दो, वे रहीम अब नाँहि ॥"

" Rahim, who once rolled in wealth,
Now lives the life of a mendicant;
Friends, do cut all ties with me;
Rahim of yore is no more."

He wants to live only to give. He believes that life is worth living only so long as one does not lose faith in giving. He observes:

"तव लग जग जीबो भलो, दीवो परै न धीम ।
बिन दीवो जीबो जगत, हमहिँ न रुचै रहीम ।।"

" Life is worth living only so long
As the stream of charity continues to flow;
It is a beggarly life indeed
When giving becomes a torment."

He always feels sad that whatever he gives is not enough and therefore he wants to be charitable all the more. His sympathy and love towards mankind are so great that he is always generous to a fault. His love is not pity or compassion that a superior feels for an inferior or a master for a servant. It is made of different stuff. He cannot bear to see anything in a wretched condition. His whole soul rebels against it and in order to improve its lot the strings of his purse become loose. On the other hand when he comes across a thing beautiful and noble he is so thrilled with joy that he cannot have control over himself and his purse. He is too gentle to think evil of anybody. It is said that in all his life he never spoke a single harsh word to any person. How could pride touch such a person who wants to be always good? He would feel extremely shy and keep his eyes fixed right on earth when he gave gifts, presents and alms. Once Ganga Kavi put this question to Nawab Khankhanan:

"सीखे कहाँ नवाब जू, ऐसी देनी दैन ।
ज्यों ज्यों कर उँचे करो, त्यों त्यों नीचे नैन ।।"

" How did you pick up
This habit of giving alms?

As the hand goes up to give
The eyes go downwards as though
automatically."

To this Khankhanan gave a reply which he alone could give. This one *Doha* embodying his reply is enough to show the gentle stuff he was made of:

"देनेवाला और है, जो देता दिन रैन ।
लोग भरम हम पै करें, या ते नीचे नैन ।।"

"It is someone else who gives;
And he gives day and night;
But people erringly think
That it is 'I' who give;
And therefore my eyes turn downwards."

So many stories of his remarkable benevolence and generosity are current in Hindi that it requires the labour of a scholar to collect and edit them in a book. Some of these, however, have been collected in a book called चकत्ता वंशपरम्परा or the *Traditions of Moghuls* which was written in 1768 A.D. Here I give two small stories which will reveal the nature of Khankhanan.

"एक़ दरिद्री ने खानखाना जू की ड्योढ़ी पर जाय कही—"मैं नवाब का साढ़ू हूँ। तब चोबदारने नवाब सूँ खबरि करी। सो नवाबने दरिद्री को बुलाया और सिष्टाचार करि बहोत स्वागत करो। तब काहू ने नवाब सों पूँछी—यह दरिद्री आपका साढ़ू किस तरह है? नवाब ने कहीं—सम्पत्ति विपत्ति दो भैन हैं। सो सम्पत्ति हमारे घर में है और विपत्ति या के घर में है तासूँ हमारा साढ़ू है।"

" A poor man once went to the palace of Nawab Khankhanan. At the gate he told the porter, " I am the husband of the sister of Khankhanan's wife." The porter conveyed the message to his master. Nawab Khankhanan was pleased to call him in and spared no expense to give him a warm reception. Thereupon someone asked him, " He is a poor man. How can he be the husband of your wife's sister?" Khankhanan smilingly said in reply, " Prosperity and adversity are two sisters. Prosperity is wedded to me and Adversity to him and so he is the husband of my wife's sister."

This is another story:

"खानखाना की पालकी में काहू ने पचसेरी डाली। ता प्रमान खानखाना ने उसे उल्टा सोना दिवाय दिया और सीख दई। तब काहू ने अरज करी जो याने तो गरदन मारने के काम किए उसे सोना क्यों दिवाय दिया। नवाबने कही—याने हमें कूँपारस जानि परीक्षा निमित्त पचसेरी पालकी में डाली है।"

" In the carriage of Khankhanan someone placed a weight of five seers. Khankhanan gave five seers of gold to him. Upon which someone went to him and said, " It is strange that instead of giving orders to behead him for his impertinence you gave him so much gold." Khankhanan replied, " This poor man wanted to test whether I had the power to convert iron into gold and so he placed this weight of five seers in my carriage."

There are several other interesting stories which refreshingly bring to the mind his wisdom, wit, nobility, generosity and capacity to understand the feelings of others.

Before Khankhanan Hindi poetry had achieved many landmarks in bardic and heroic narratives, didactic poems, devotional songs, love lyrics and mystical verses. He took a totally different line. He had seen life in its various aspects and colours. He wanted to present in small, simple and soft metres the experiences of his life. It is remarked that what is intensive can never be extensive. The intensity of feeling will lose all its poignancy if it is expressed in long metres. He therefore employs small and soft metres like *Doha* and *Barava* in colourful imagery and sometimes in natural simplicity in which he paints sometimes with vigour and skill the pictures of life. *Doha* was first used in the verses of *Apabhransha* language and therefrom it came into Hindi. It was Kabir who made it popular and rich in expression. Khankhanan gave to it a new elegance and finish. He was fully alive to its beauty and importance. He has paid a tribute to this metre in the following *Doha*:

"दीरघ दोहा अर्थ के, आखर थोरे आँहि।
ज्यों रहीम नट-कुण्डली, सिमिटि कूदि कढ़ि जाँहि॥"

"The meaning of *Doha* is vast;
But the body small: of a few letters;
It is just like a small ring
Through which a rope-dancer contracting all his body jumps and goes out."

Whatever he says in his *Dohas* he says in a few words and fully. His little *Dohas* are like jewels in which shines the charming lustre of his feelings and imagination. The beauty of a diamond lies in its cut and Khankhanan knows how to cut artistically the jewels of his poems. In his *Dohas* he puts new constructions on mythological allegories, classical allusions and time-honoured conventions. He gives a little poetic twist to them and they change their appearance and meaning. It is true that he is not always original in his observations but then his originality does not lie in thought but in the meaning and colour that he gives to it. He is a man of culture and taste. He has drunk deep the lore of ancient wisdom in Sanskrit. He has rendered many Sanskrit verses into Hindi but even in them we can see the fresh meaning that he brings. He is a minute observer of life and nature and it is from these sources that he gets all the material and inspiration for his art and poetry. There is a dignity, an elegance and a perfection of art in whatever he says. I give a few illustrations from some of his remarkable *Dohas*:

"पीतम छबि नैनन बसी, औरन कहाँ समाय।
भरी सराय रहीम लखि, पथिक आप फिर जाय॥"

"Every inch of space in my eyes
Is occupied by the beauty of my love;
It is impossible now for anything to get into it;
A traveller finding all the space in an inn occupied to the full
Has to take his shelter elsewhere."

"कमला थिर न रहीम कहि, लखत अधम जे कोई।
प्रभु की सो अपनी कहे, क्यों न फजीहत होई॥"

"They are fools who say
That Lakshmi keeps to none;
Everybody knows that she is wedded to God Vishnu Himself;
How then can she be of anybody else?"

How beautifully in this *Doha* he shows that all wealth belongs to God. According to the stories of Hindu mythology, Lakshmi is wedded to Vishnu. He puts a new construction upon this story.

"बड़े पेट के भरन में, है रहीम दुख बाढ़ि।
या तें हाथी हहरि के, दिए दाँत द्वै काढ़ि॥"

"It is really a calamity having to fill up a large belly;
The elephant knows it fully—
When the agony could not be endured any more,
It seems to burst out in the two tusks."

There is obviously a touch of humour in this verse.

"रहिमन जाचकता गहे, बड़े छोट व्है जात।
नारायण हू को भयो बावन, आँगुर गात॥"

"The person who goes to beg at others' doors
Loses all dignity;
Even God Vishnu when he went as a suppliant to the door of Bali
Had to assume the form of a dwarf."

What a poetic interpretation he has given in this verse to the allegory of the Dwarf-incarnation of Vishnu!

"अमिय पिलावत मान बिनु, रहिमन मोहि न सुहाय।
मान सहित मरिबो भलो, जो विष देइ बुलाय ॥"

"I would rather take poison if offered to me with courtesy and respect than nectar with insult and humiliation. It is better to die a noble death than to live a life of humiliation."

"जे रहीम विधि बड़ किए, को कहि दूषण काढ़ि।
चन्द्र दूबरो कूबरो, तऊ नखत ते बाढ़ि ॥"

"If God has made someone great
All his defects cannot make him small;
The moon, however small and ill-shaped,
Is greater and more beautiful than all the stars."

It is to the credit of Khankhanan that he gave a new metre to Hindi. It is shorter and more delicate than *Doha*. It is called by the name of *Barava*. It has got a sweet pastoral touch in it. It is stated that a certain village girl in order to save her husband from the displeasure of Nawab Khakhanan for his long absence from his court sent a verse of two lines to him which was written in *Barava* metre. He was so pleased with the verse that he not only forgave his negligence but also amply rewarded him. Later on he introduced this metre into classical Hindi poetry. Tulasi Das also took a fancy for it and wrote *Barava Ramayan* the story of Rama in *barava* metre.

This metre sung in chorus creates an atmosphere of its own with its delicate rhythm and melodious tune. Even in modern Hindi poetry, Pandit Shridhar Pathak who has translated *The Deserted Village* and *The Traveller* of Goldsmith into Hindi has used this metre in all its picturesqueness. He has written his *Nayika-Bheda* or *Kinds of mistresses in Barava* metre. Although the subject is not new and has been fully dealt with in the books of Sanskrit Rhetoric he has given a new appearance and poetical charm to it. Its very simplicity and commonplaceness have made it picturesque and romantic.

This is how he describes "मुग्धा नायिका" a mistress in the first stage who feels that she has become young all of a sudden but is unable to understand her own mind:

"लहरत लहर लहरिया, लहर बहार ।
मोतिन जरी किनरिया, बिथुरे बार ॥
लागेउ आन नवेलहिँ, मनसिज बान ।
उकसन लाग उरजवा, दिग तिरछान ॥
कौन रोग दुई छतियाँ, उकस्यो आई ।
दुखि दुखि उठत करेजवा, जनु लगि लाई ॥
औचक आइ जोबनवाँ, मोंहि दुख दीन ।
छुटिगो संग गोइनवाँ, नहिं भल दीन ॥"

"She is wearing a *laharia* silken Sari;
Its borders are set with pearls;
Her hair is spread all over her face;
As the wind passes over her
It makes her *Sari* and hair picturesquely wavy.

The arrow of Love has gone deep into her heart;
And so her breasts have become swollen and glances slanting.
What is this malady that has enlarged my breasts;
There is a burning pain all over my limbs.
Youth has come upon me all of a sudden.
It has deprived me of the company of my friends.
It makes me terribly sad."

In this strain he continues to describe her condition and then comes to the second stage when she understands her feelings but cannot express them and at last comes the final stage when she cannot only understand her feelings but knows how to express them fully.

I give below a few *Baravas* which he has written in a book "बरवै" (*Baravas*). He has written some *Baravas* in Persian also. I have included two Persian *Baravas* in the illustrations given below. They are of general nature and interest.

"ज्यों चौरासी लख में मानुष देह ।
त्यों ही दुर्लभ जग में, सहज सनेह ।।
जब ते बिछुरे मितवा, कहु कस चैन ।
रहत भर्यो हिय साँसन, आँसुन नैन ।।
कैसे जानत कोऊ, दूर बसाय ।
पल अन्तर हू सजनी, रह्यो न जाय ।।

मीं गुज़रद ईं दिलरा, बेदिलदार ।
यक यक साअत हमचूँ, साल हज़ार ॥
कै गोयम अहवालम, पेश निगार ।
तनहा नज़र न आयद, दिल लाचार ॥
बालम अस मन मिलयऊँ, जस पयपानि ।
हंसनि भइल सवतिया, लई बिलगानि ॥ "

" As in the eighty-four lakhs of forms of existence it is difficult to be born as a human being;
So it is hard to obtain sweet and natural love in this life.
Ever since my love went
I have become a wretch;
My heart is choked with sighs and eyes with tears.
" How one knows to live at a distant place,
Oh, even for a moment I cannot live without him.
How without him the time becomes dull and heavy;
A moment looks like thousands of years.
How to show my heart to him is a problem.
He is never alone.
I feel so helpless.
I had become so one with him
As is milk with water;
But my rival like a female swan
Has separated us both."

It is a poetical convention in Sanskrit that when milk mixed with water is placed before a swan he separates milk from water.

In Hindi, Sanskrit metres had long fallen into disuse. But some poets made use of *Malini* and other long and sweet metres of Sanskrit when they wrote verses in Persianised Sanskrit or in Hindi in which full Sanskrit and Persian words were used profusely. Although this sort of language and form of poetry did not become popular, it had a charm which attracted the attention of Khankhanan. In these poems it appears as if Persian and Sanskrit words in their gay colours are performing a circular dance to the tune and music of the metre. Here he had an opportunity to bring into play the music of the words of both these languages with which he was closely familiar. He has written the *Madanashtaka* (मदनाष्टक) —eight verses on love. Obviously this sort of composition cannot have much poetic value but still it is interesting to see how Sanskrit and Persian words placed together create a new music and harmony in language. Presumably he wanted to suggest thereby that when such was the case with words, how much more harmony and good-will would be created if both Hindus and Muslims could come close to each other and be linked in a golden tie of love.

I give two illustrations from his *Madanashtaka*. It is *Malini* metre that he has used;

"शरदनिशि निशीथे चांँद की रोशनाई,
सघनवननिकुञ्जे कान्ह वंशी बजाई ।
रति, पति, सुत, निद्रा, साइयाँ छोड़ भागीं,
मदनशिरसि भूयः क्या बला आन लागीं ।।

जरदवसनवाला, गुल चमन देखता था,
झुक झुक मतवाला, गावता रेखता था,
श्रुतियुग चपला से, कुण्डलें झूमते थे,
नयन कर तमाशे, मस्त व्हैं घूमते थे ॥"

"It was the dead of night, flooded with the
autumnal moonlight;
All were fast asleep;
At this time, Krishna, from a dense forest,
overgrown with shrubs and creepers,
played upon his flute;
All the female cowherds rose in confusion
from their beds;
Leaving their husbands, children and
everything they ran up to him;
What a calamity had fallen to the Lot of
Cupid again!
Wearing yellow garments he cast a sweet
glance on the flowers of Spring;
In an inspired mood, he poured out his
heart in "Rekhtas" or in indigenous songs;
His earrings and pupils of the eyes
Were dancing mirthfully to the tune."

Here I give a *shloka* of Khankhanan written in *Shardul-Vikridit* metre of Sanskrit. In it the first half of aline is in Sanskrit and the other in Hindi

"एकस्मिन् दिवसावसानसमये, मैं था गया बाग़ में,
काचित्तत्र कुरङ्गशावनयना, गुल तोड़ती थी खड़ी ।
तां दृष्ट्वा नवयौवनां शशिमुखीं, मैं मोह में जा पड़ा,
नो जीवामि त्वया विना शृणु प्रिये, तू यार कैसे मिले ॥"

"In the dark shadows of evening I went to a garden;
And there I saw an apparition of beauty, picking flowers;
As I saw her my eyes forgot to see anything else;
And now all my life has become an unbearable burden to me;
Will you lighten it by coming to me?"

Khankhanan has written a book *Kheta Kautukam* (खेटकौतुकम्). It is a book on astrology. It is in verse the language of which is Persianised Sanskrit. Herein I give an illustration:

"यदा मुश्तरी केन्द्रखाने त्रिकोणे, यदा वक्रख़ाने रिपौ आफ़ताबः ।
अतारिद विलग्ने नरो वख्तपूर्णस्तदा दीनदारोऽथवा बादशाहः ॥"

"A man who is born when Jupiter is in the centre or in a triangle, the Sun in the house of Mars just in the opposite and Mercury on the point of intersection must be very lucky. Either he must be a king or a great man."

Mark the Persian words *Mushtari*, *Khana*, *Aftab*, *Atarid*, *Vakht*, *Dindar* and *Badshah*.

Some nine works are ascribed to him. Among these his *Dohas* are the most popular.

Such was Abdur Rahim Khankhanan and his poetry. The time will come when each of his works will be studied with the care and attention it deserves. Today most of our literature is not considered in its true perspective. Either it is exaggeratedly praised or completely ignored. Unfortunately even in literature deep-rooted prejudices and long-established conventions still hold the field. They do not permit us to look straight into the spirit of things and to understand them in their own way. When all the colours unite they make white and only in white colour the nature of all colours can be observed. In the same way when all life is put together a unity of vision is obtained in which all the differences and disharmonies can properly be examined. Khankhanan had achieved that oneness of vision which made his mind unprejudiced and free. He was a man first and last. He has bequeathed a heritage which posterity will feel proud to own. As a dark cloud after showering down all its life-giving water on the parched earth becomes empty and white and is adorned in splendid colours by the rays of the setting sun, similarly the memory of Nawab Abdur Rahim Khankhanan who gave his all to enrich Hindi poetry will be cherished with gratitude by the people of this country.

Kabir, a bard of the Common ma

KABIR, A POET OF THE COMMON MAN

I am extremely thankful to Shri Khwaja Mohammad Ahmad for his kind invitation to me to give a talk to the members of the Rotary Club, Hyderabad on "Kabir, a poet of the common man" this evening. Although constitutionally, Hindi has become the *Rashtrabhasha* of our country today, it owes mostly its present position to persons like Kabir who presumably foresaw many centuries ago, the part Hindi was destined to play, in the days to come, in the life of our nation. Hindi at his time had just started its career and was not so developed as it is today. Kabir gave it a vision and a mission to build the entire human society on the basis of love and equality. A language does not live by its great wealth of words or imagery alone but by the richness of its spirit and greatness of its soul. Many people have studied and would study Hindi only for the sake of Kabir. Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, a great poet of modern times, was so much enamoured of the poetry of Kabir that he translated his hundred poems into English.

Like all other great men the personality of Kabir is manysided. He is a saint, reformer, mystic and philosopher but in my opinion his name will go down in the history of our country more as a man of vision, and a poet than in any other capacity. There are many critics who are sceptical of his achievements as a poet because they consider poetry to be a pagentry of artistic and colourful designs of words and imagery rather than a simple, spontaneous and rhythmic expression of a human soul. Poetry to be real must be as true and simple as life itself. It is true that poetry reveals itself in the form of words but it is not merely a matter of words as many people think. It is essentially an achievement of the human mind. It may reveal itself sometimes even in the most unartistic and crude forms of words and yet its apparent roughness and crudity may be necessary to make it forceful, vigorous and effective. It is true that the poetry of Kabir is couched in simple and artless words but its vast popularity even today shows its powerful hold over the people.

The greatness of Kabir lies in the fact that he always takes pride in being a common man. He proclaims to the whole world, that he is a *Julaha*—a weaver. He never puts in any claim to be a poet. He has got no such pretensions. If he says repeatedly in his poems that he comes from a humble family of weavers.—it does not mean that he suffers from inferiority complex—as many critics think. The fact is that he feels great pleasure in being the commonest of the common and he never gives up his profession and remains a weaver to the last of his days—even when he achieves fame as a poet. He sees no incompatibility between being a weaver and being a poet. He is a master weaver who knows how to weave fabrics of his poems out of the fine yarn of his experiences and observations of human life. He remarks in one of his '*dohas*':

"नान्ही काती चित्त दे, मँहगे मोल बिकाय
गाहक ताज़ा राम है, और न नेड़े आय"

"To fetch a high price
Pay heed to fine weaving
The Lord alone will come
forward to purchase it
No body else will dare to come near it."

He wants to produce a cloth the high price of which can be paid by the Lord alone. From this it is clear that the cloth that he wove was simple but it was in no way cheap. The cloth of his poems that he wove has become all the more costly with the lapse of time. It is the commonness of Kabir that makes him and his poems so uncommon. In every detail Kabir is most common but his commonness is made of very uncommon stuff. While he regards himself as one of the most humble and common human beings—he has got no sense of inferiority in him. He never puts on airs of any kind. He is always himself. Like a plant he derives all the nourishment and strength from the rugged soil of commonness. His feet are firmly planted on the common earth. It is really strange that in moments when he is most earthly, he is most etherial. In no way does he desire to differentiate himself from common folk. He wears their dress ; he speaks their language and he walks and moves freely among them. In them alone he feels fully at home. He has no desire to get a higher place or status than is given to an ordinary person. Outward show is not of any importance to him. It is life, pure and simple, shorn of all superfluities and glamour that appeals to him. He is as unassuming and natural as Nature itself.

Kabir in his observations and poems is never conventional. He sees with his own eyes, hears with his own ears and speaks in his own language. He is always face to face with life. He regards this world as a market place where everybody is plying his own trade. He says :—

"यह संसार हाट करि जानूँ, सबको वणिजग आया
चेत सको तो चेतो रे भाई, मूरख मूल गँवाया"

" I regard this world as a market place
Everybody has come here for plying some kind of trade
Keep awake and do your business cautiously O brother
Fools lose all in the bargain."

Similarly:

"यह संसार बजार मंडा है, जानेगा जन कोई"

" Very few people realize that this world is nothing but a market place."

And again :

"इस दुनिया में आइ कै, छोड़ देइ तू ऐंठ
लेना है सो लेइ लै, उठी जात है पैंठ"

" In this world never give away yourself to pride,
Go to everybody and take what you want
The market is soon going to disperse."

The market is a redezvous where all sorts of people come and meet naturally. Here he meets all kinds of people without any hitch and formality. It is here that he addresses them with all his heart. Here he watches people at close quarters. He does not feel pleasure in going to temples or mosques or such other places of worship because they are meant above all for a particular community or religion but the bazaar is a place—open to all persons alike. There he talks with all, addresses them and gives vent to his feelings and thoughts without fear or favour.

He says :

"कबिरा खड़ा बजार में, लिए मुराड़ा हाथ
अब घर फूँकौं तासु का, जो चले हमारे साथ"

" Kabir is standing in the market,
He has got in his hands a piece of burning wood,
He has burnt his own house
And now he will burn the house of the person
Who will go along with him."

It is very significant that Kabir takes fancy to a bazaar, a place which may not be liked by many people on account of dust, din and bustle but to Kabir it is a most remarkable place where he finds humanity in full play. The bazaar is a place where all people meet irrespective of their caste or creed, community or religion. Kabir goes to the market-place and stands up there and tells one and all in the most simple and homely language the great secret and truth of life but all are preoccupied so much with their everyday affairs that no body is in a mood to listen to him. He speaks out the agony of his mind, experienced on such occasions in one of his songs:—

"यह जग अन्धा मैं केहि समुझावौं
इक दुइ होइ उन्हें समुझावौं, सबहिं भुलाना पेट का धन्धा"

"This world is blind
To whom should I go and tell ?
If there had been one or two
I would have certainly gone to and prevailed over them,
Everybody is lost in the affairs of his belly."

He thinks that man should always learn directly from life; he should try to see truth face to face. In his opinion book-knowledge is not enough and cannot improve matters much. When a man is hungry—actual food and not the talk of food can satisfy his hunger. When he finds that great scholars and pandits indulge only in tall talk and do not possess real knowledge he cries out in disgust :—

"कबीर पढ़िबा दूर करि, पुस्तक देइ बहाइ"

Kabir says :—

"Do away with the reading of Books.
Throw away all the books in water."

And again :—

"कथता, बकता, सुरता सोई
आप बिचारै सो ज्ञानी होई"

"He who thinks himself is the knower
He is the sayer, expounder and listener."

As Kabir was a weaver and speaks in the homely language of common people and decries book-learning, a belief prevails in the minds of many scholars that he was altogether an illiterate person. Though he never boasts of his book-learning yet it is clear from the study of his works that he was not only well acquainted with the trends of contemporary Hindi Literature but that he knew Persian and Arabic Languages also. It seems impossible that he could have acquired all this knowledge simply from the contacts he had with certain class of scholarly people. I just quote a few lines from one of his songs which show that he knew Persian Language :

"खालिक हरि कहीं दर हाल
पंजर जसि करद दुसमन, मुरद करि पैमाल
पहनाम परदा ईत आतिस खुर्दा समां बिसियार
हम ज़मीं असमान ख़ालिक गुंद मुसकिल कार
हम चुं बूंदनि बूंद ख़ालिक गरम हम तुम पेस
कबीर पनह खुदाई की रह दियार दावानेस".

Kabir is one of those great poets who were perfectly aware of the vast potentialities of Hindi. In his poems Kabir uses such simile and metaphor that depict the vast life which was spread around him. This is how he depicts the helplessness and pitiful condition of village life in his days:

"अब न बसूँ इहि गाँव गुसाईं
तेरे नेवगी खरे सयाने

गाँव कु ठाकुर खेत कु नेपे
काइथ खरच न पारे
जोरि जेवरी खेत पसारे
सब मिलि मोको मारे
कहै कबीर सुनहु रे सन्तो
हरि भजि बाँधी भेरा
अब की बेर बकसि बन्दे को
सब खत करीं नबेरा"

"No longer shall I live in this village O Lord!
The Tax Collectors are shrewd and harsh
The *Thakur* of the Village wants to usurp all the lands
The *Kayasth* or the village account keeper never maintains the accounts properly
Fastening me with a rope
They put me to the yoke and make me plough the fields,
Mehto or the village headman
Is a wicked person
They all beat me
Kabir says: "Let God be praised
Show mercy this time to your bondsman
And I shall clear all my accounts."

In the following poem there is a talk between Kabir and a beautiful nymph that comes down from heaven to marry Kabir. See how Kabir introduces himself to her. He never hesitates to tell her that he was a most ordinary person:

"तुम घर जाहु हमारी बहना, बिष लागें तुम्हारे नैना
सरग लोक थे हम चलि आई, करन कबीर भरतारौ
सरग लोग में क्या दुख पड़िया, तुम आई कलि माँहीं
जाति जुलाहा, नाम कबीरा, अजहुं पतीजौ नाहीं
तहाँ जाहु जँह पाट पटम्बर, अगर चन्दन घसि लीना
आइ हमारे कहा करौगी, हम तौ जाति कमीना"

Kabir : "My sister, go to your house
Your eyes appear to be dipped in poison

Nymph: You see, I have come down from heaven to have Kabir as my husband

Kabir : Oh, what calamity has befallen you in heaven that you have come down to earth in this *Kali* age
My name is Kabir
I am a weaver by birth
I see, you do not trust me
Go to some high class rich person who wears costly silken constumes and anoints his body with sandal paste
What would you gain if you live with me
I am a man lowest of the low."

To Kabir human life in all forms is welcome and worth-living. Any occupation be it of a cobbler, washerman, priest or warrior is all the same to him. He is convinced that no calling is too mean to prevent a man from realising the great secret of life. In his opinion no life is greater than a natural and honest life and it has nothing to do with rituals and ceremonies of any kind.

He says in one of his songs :

"आवध राम, सबै करम करिहूँ
सहज समाधि, न जम ते डरिहूँ
कुम्हरा ह्वै के बासन घरिहूँ, धोबी ह्वै मल धोऊँ
चमरा ह्वै के रँगौं अधौरी, जात-पाँत कुल खोऊँ
तेली ह्वै तन कोल्हू करिहौं, पाप-पुन्य दोउ पीरौं
पंच बैल जब सूध चलाऊँ, राम जेवरिया जोरौं
छत्री ह्वै करि खड्ग सँभालौं, जोग जुगुति दोउ साधूँ
नउवा ह्वै करि यहु तन धूतौं, बधिक ह्वै मन मारूँ
बनजारा ह्वै तन को बनिजूँ, जूआरी ह्वै जम हारूँ
तन करि नौका, मन करूँ खेवट, रसना करूँ वडारूँ
कह कबीर भवसागर तरिहुँ, आप तरूँ जग तारूँ"

"Ram ! We shall do all kinds of work unhesitatingly
We shall lead a true and natural life
Even death will not make us swerve an inch from the path of our duty
We shall be potters and make pots
We shall be washermen and wash all the dirt
We shall be cobblers and colour the hide
By doing our work properly we shall lose the bonds of caste and family
We shall be oilmen and make this body an oilpress and squeeze out of it both vice and virtue

We shall fasten the bullocks of senses with
the rope of Ram and see that they do
their work properly
We shall be warriors and take up sword
We shall be *Yogis* and perform *Yoga*
We shall be barbers and cleanse our minds
We shall be butchers and kill our minds
We shall be tradesmen and barter away
our bodies for divinity,
We shall play dice and lose death
We shall make this body as our boat
and our mind as boatsman
Kabir says that in this way we shall cross
and take others across this ocean of
the world."

By showing regard for all kinds of work—he shows the dignity of work and labour. By adhering to one's profession and work however mean and low it may look in the eyes of the world—one can fulfil the highest purpose of life. About Hindus and Muslims Kabir says :

"सोई हिन्दु सोई मुसलमान
जा को दुरुस रहे ईमान"

"He is a Hindu and He is a Musalman
Who is true to his profession."

Kabir does not regard any person, faith, family, cult and profession to be superior to another. In his eyes all are equal. He says:

"नहिं को ऊँचा, नहिं को नीचा"

"No body is superior and no body inferior."

And again :

"जब लग ऊँच नीच कर जाना
ते पसुआ भूले भ्रम नाना"

"So long as there is a feeling of high and low,
superiority, or inferiority a man is nothing but a beast steeped in ignorance."

Life is not a thing to be sought after. It is within us all. It is foolish to look for it elsewhere. It can be realized by the meanest of the mean, without any effort any moment and anywhere. It is not to be achieved by any supernatural or scriptural methods. It is already there and not different from our existence in any way. Is it not ridiculous that a thing which all of us possess and without which we cannot exist even for a moment is laboriously sought after elsewhere. Kabir says in one of his very famous songs :

"मो को कहाँ ढूंढ़े बन्दे ! मैं तो तेरे पास में
ना बकरी में ना भेड़ी में, ना मैं छुरी गंडास में
ना तो कौनो क्रिया-करम में, नहीं जोग वैराग में
खोजी होय तो तुरतै मिलिहौं, पल भर की तालास में
कहत कबीर सुनो भइ साधो, सब सांसों की सांस में"

"O my bondsman, where are you looking
for me
I am not to be found in the sacrifice of
goats, sheep or other animals ;

I am not in a temple, mosque, Kaba or Kailash
I am not in religious rites, Yoga or renunciation,
If you are a true seeker you will find me in a moment
I am the breath of all breaths."

A person who feels life that throbs in him and in every being—never dies. He becomes life itself. Kabir's Ram or Atmaram is nothing except this great life which breathes through everything and reveals itself in everything. In an ecstatic mood Kabir says about the immortality of this life :

"हम न मरैं मरिहै संसारा
हम को मिला जियावनहारा
अब न मरौं, मरने मन माना
तेइ मुए जिन राम न जाना
हरि मरिहै तो हमहूँ मरिहैं
हरि न मरै हम काहे कू मरिहैं"

"We are not going to die
It is this material world that will perish
I shall not die, because my mind has become steeped in life
Those are dead who have not seen Ram or life face to face
If life dies—we shall also die
And if life lives, how can we die?"

Immortality of life is nothing but an unforgettable and constant feeling of the fullness of life that pervades everywhere. Kabir is a poet of Life, life that throbs within the meanest of the mean and is to be found in all things. This love of life sparkles in every word of his poetry. As life never dies so will his poetry never die because it is so full of life.

INDEX

Abhijnana Shakuntalam, 1
Abhisheka, 25
Agnimitra, 10, 13, 14, 17
Aja, 15
Aharya, 9
Akaba, 65, 67
Alaka-Puri, 55
Angika, 9
Apabhransha, 47, 71
Arabic, 88
Aristotle, 27
Ashadha, 54
Ashoka, 14
Ashram, 31, 34, 61
Atmarama, 94
Ayu, 61

Babar, 67
Bairam Khan, 65
Bala-charita, 4
Bali, 73
Bali, 25
Barava, 71, e 74, 76
Bharat Muni, 4, 23, 24, 26, 51, 52
Bhasa, 1, 4, 25
Bhavabhuti, 28
Bhavaprakashanam, 23
Biharilal, 13
Buddhistic, 26

Carlyle, 5
Chakatta, 69
Chalita, 8, 9
Chhalika, 8
Chhappaya, 67
Chatushpadi, 8

Dadu Dayal, 66
Damodar, 4
Dasharatha, 25
"Deserted Village," 75
Dharini, 14, 15
Doha, 13, 14, 60, 64, 67, 69, 71, 72, 73, 74, 83
Durvasa, 27, 33, 34, 39, 41
Duryodhana, 25
Dushyanta, 27, 31, 32, 36, 38, 39, 41, 42

English, 82
Europe, 19, 22

Ganadasa, 5, 13, 14
Gandharva-Maadna-Vana, 56
Ganga Kavi, 67, 68
Gautami, 31, 32, 33
Goldsmith, 75
Greek, 27

Hallishaka, 4, 8
Hamboldt, 56
Haradatta, 14
Hemakuta, 39
Hindi, 41, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 71, 74, 75, 78, 79, 82, 88
Holi, 17
Hyderabad, 82

India, 1, 19
Indra, 39, 49, 50, 52, 53, 61
Indumati, 15
Iravati, 14, 17

Jain, 26
Jones : William, 19
Julaha, 63

Kabir, 41, 60, 80, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95
Kalidasa, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 29, 39, 43, 44, 46, 53, 56, 60
Kartikeya, 56
Karuna, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27
Katayawema, Raja, 16, 47
Kaushiki, 8, 9, 12, 15
Kavya, 29
Kayastha, 89
Keshava, 51
Keshi, 48
Khan Khanan Abdur Rahim, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 72, 74, 78, 80
'Kheta-Kautukam,' 80
Khwaja Mohammed Ahmed, 82
Kratu, 6
Krishna, 4, 15, 79
Kumara-Vana, 56

Laharia, 75
Lakshmi, 51, 73
Lakshmi-Swayambar, 51
Lasya, 6

Madanashtaka, 78
Mahabharata, 27, 38
Malavika, 1, 2, 3, 4, 14, 16, 44
Malavika, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17
Malavikagnimitram, 1
Malini, 78
Mandakini, 56
Maranam, 24
Marga, 7
Matali, 39
Meghaduta, 54, 55
Mehto, 89
Menaka, 36, 51
Moghul, 69
Mrichhikatika, 25
Mukha-Dikharavani, 15

Nala, 15
Narada, 61
Natya Darpana, 26
Natya Shastra, 4, 23, 26
Nayika Bheda, 75

Parvati, 7
Persian, 65, 66, 67, 76, 78, 80, 88
Prakrit, 10
Pratima, 25
Prekshagriha, 9
Priyadarshika, 17
Pururava, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55 56, 60, 61
Purushottam, 52
Pushpakaranda, 25

Rabindra Nath Tagore, 82
Raidasa, 66
Rama, 91, 92, 94
Ramachandra Suri, 26
Ramayan, 74
Ranganatha, 47
Rasa, 22, 26
Rashtrabhasha, 82
Ratnavali, 17, 25
Reeti, 16
Rekhta, 79

Rotary, 82
Rukmini, 15

Sagarika, 25
Sahitya-Darpana, 24, 25
Sangamaniya Mani, 59
Sanskrit, 1, 3, 21, 25, 29, 45, 65, 66, 72, 78, 79
Satwika, 9
Shachitirtha, 33
Shakuntala, 1; 2, 19, 20, 27, 28, 29, 37, 44

Shakuntala, 27, 30, 31, 32 33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 41, 42
Shardevtanaya, 23
Shardul-Vikridita, 79
Shastra, 12
Shiva, 6, 7
Shloka, 79
Shree Harsha Deva, 17
Shridhar Pathak, 75
Shringar, 26, 27
Sowbhagya, 15, 30
Stambhita-Ranbham, 45

Tandava, 6
Thakur, 89
'Traveller,' 75
Trotaka, 45, 46
Turkish, 67

Uma, 6
Upavahana, 10
Urubhanga, 25
Urvashi, 1, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 54, 55
Urvashi, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 53, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61
Uttar-Ramacharita, 28

Vachaspatyam, 25
Vachika, 9
Vaidarbhi, 16
Vaishnova, 66
Vasantasena,
Varuni, 51
Vidarbha, 1, 15, 16

Vidushaka, 14, 13, 17
Vidyadhari, 56
Vikram, 56
Vikramorvashiyam, 1
Vishnu, 51, 73, 74
Vishwajit, 67
Vishwanath, 24, 26
Vrindavana, 4

Yajna, 6, 67
Yaksha, 54, 55

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